

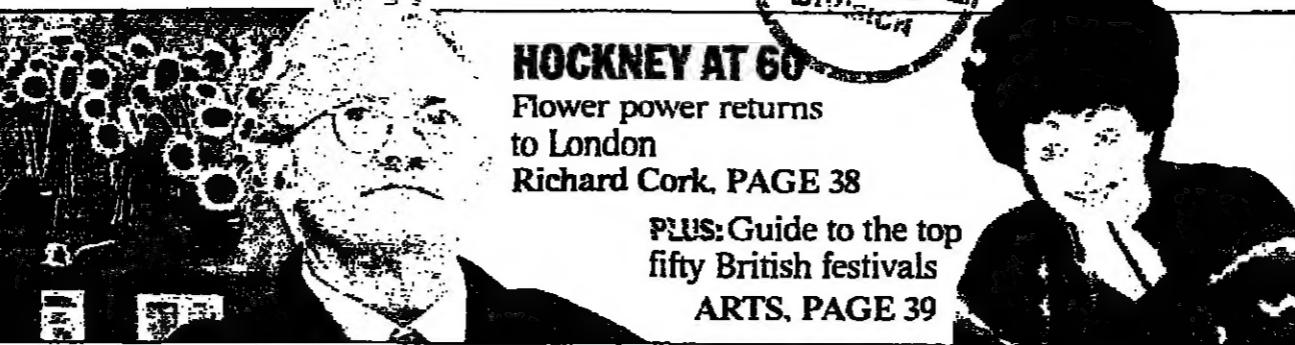
No. 65,841

WEDNESDAY MARCH 19 1997



TIE SOCIETY
Grace Bradberry
on men who win
by a neck

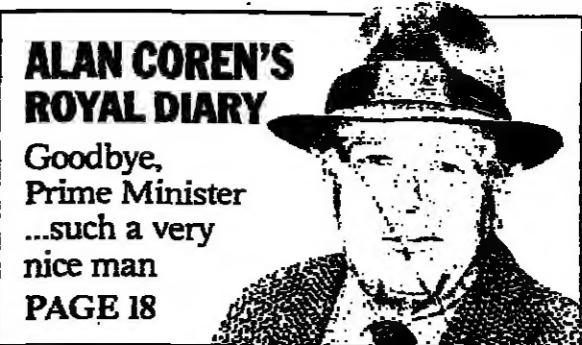
PAGE 16



HOCKNEY AT 60

Flower power returns
to London
Richard Cork, PAGE 38

PLUS: Guide to the top
fifty British festivals
ARTS, PAGE 39



**ALAN COREN'S
ROYAL DIARY**

Goodbye,
Prime Minister
...such a very
nice man
PAGE 18

Shephard attack on Labour as education Bill is casualty of last-minute deal to clear decks

Tories forced to abandon school plans

BY PHILIP WEBSTER, ARTHUR LEATHLEY AND JANET BUSH

FLAGSHIP plans to allow greater selection and the expansion of grant-maintained schools were sacrificed by the Government yesterday in the rush to clear the legislative decks before Parliament rises on Friday for the general election.

On the second day of the election campaign, Conservative business managers were forced, during negotiations with their Labour counterparts, to drop 19 clauses from the education Bill, including plans which they said would pave the way for a grammar school in every large town.

The Tories reacted angrily last night. Gillian Shephard, the Education Secretary, claimed that Labour had "shown themselves in their true colours. However much they pretend, we now know what Labour really believes. They are opposed to excellence, opposed to choice, opposed to diversity, indifferent to standards of good behaviour." She said that Labour had ignored the wishes of four out of five voters who want selection in schools.

The proposals were the main casualty of the horse-trading between the Labour and Tory whips, which was designed to get as much legislation through as possible before MPs depart.

In return, Labour has agreed to accept the Bill's proposal to extend to preparatory schools the assisted places scheme, which it is committed to phasing out.

Another minister said: "This

proves that Labour is against selection, apart from those members of the front-bench who want it for their own children."

The Government pledged, however, to bring back the proposals in its election manifesto and to make them a substantial campaigning

TV WATCH
NICHOLAS WAPSHOTT
6 Blair was not
flustered, but you
could tell by his
face that he is
rarely spoken to
like this. He is used
to being
applauded

Review..... Matthew Parris Page 8
Peter Riddell Page 9
Simon Jenkins Page 18
Media Page 23

theme. The bulk of the Bill's clauses will remain, including those increasing discipline, introducing home-school contracts between schools and parents. Ofsted inspection powers over local education authorities, assessments of children entering primary schools and targets for improving standards in schools.

Continued on page 2, col 5

Regulation of supply teachers and reforms to the careers service will also survive under the whip's agreement.

In another deal last night, Labour agreed to allow through the crime Bill proposed by Michael Howard, the Home Secretary. However, it will support a Lords amendment giving judges more discretion over minimum sentences. The vote Commons vote is expected tomorrow and it appears likely that the Government will be able to overturn the defeat it sustained last month.

Mrs Shephard was also defeated over the education Bill last month, when peers supported moves that would require schools planning to increase selection to consult affected neighbouring schools. Any objections would trigger a local public inquiry. The Lords defeat came after MPs rejected government plans to relax controls on grant-maintained schools, allowing them to increase by 50 per cent the proportion of pupils selected by ability.

The behind-the-scenes manœuvres took place yesterday as the main parties began marking out the battle lines for the campaign.

Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, set out his plans to impose a windfall tax on the privatised utilities, although his refusal to name the companies affected was described as disgraceful by the Tories.

John Major was clearly delighted at the prospect of meeting David Coulthard, Britain's most recent motor racing hero, and getting the chance to meddle with one of

Continued on page 2, col 5

the fastest cars on Earth. But his wife, after flashing an initial smile to waiting photographers, looked decidedly fed up with the rest of the visit to McLaren's Formula One racing plant in Surry.

Whether she was suffering first-day campaign nerves or a wife's natural boredom in watching her husband fiddle with macho racing machines, her gloomy countenance did little to lighten the Tory campaign mood. After an hour-long visit, Mrs Major fled the Woking plant in a separate car

from the Prime Minister, renewing Tory worries that she may not be an eager traveller on the campaign trail.

Mr Major's trip was primed by Tory strategists to conjure up images of racing starts, victories and even a little sporting machismo. Instead, the day was marred by minor mishaps.

The media on the Tory campaign battle-bus travelled towards the McLaren factory with appetites whetted by promises that Coulthard's

Australian Grand Prix-winning car would be "fired up". Their enthusiasm waned on arrival. The shell of the car, without wheels, was balanced precariously on a pair of trestles.

Undaunted, Mr Major strode to the gleaming machine with all the purpose of a racing champion. Alas, the detachable steering wheel came off in his hands.

When he tried to talk about privatised rail cancellations, his speech was drowned by a passing high-speed train.

Cabinet ministers lose fast track to the Lords

By OUR POLITICAL EDITOR

JOHN MAJOR is preparing to break with tradition by declining to give life peerages to all the former senior ministers retiring at the general election.

In a move that will send a tremor down the long list of ministers counting on a second career in the House of Lords, the Prime Minister has indicated that he believes life peerages should go to senior figures likely to carry on working — and voting — for the Conservative cause in the Upper House. Those thought more likely to devote most of their time to business could be disappointed.

It has been a long-standing convention that Cabinet service guarantees a peerage — Sir John Nott, Defence Secretary during the Falklands war, was one of very few not to be so honoured.

But Mr Major has been disappointed by the voting records of some ennobled in 1992 and he now wants to shift the approach, using life peerages to reward loyalty and long service in important backbench posts.

He has a limited number of peerages at his disposal and does not believe that former ministers who regularly rebel against the Government from the backbenches should have a claim ahead of hard-working MPs who have backed a prime minister through thick and thin. It has also been noted that several former MPs who did not reach the Cabinet, such as Lord Clark of Kempston, have been excellent attenders in the Lords.

Win or lose on May 1, Mr Major will be responsible for June's dissolution honours

Continued on page 2, col 7

Face that says I'd rather not be here

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

NORMA MAJORS finely-lined "celebrity smile" vanished abruptly yesterday to reveal a persistently grim expression as her husband tried to inject a dash of glamour into the day-old election campaign.

John Major was clearly delighted at the prospect of meeting David Coulthard, Britain's most recent motor racing hero, and getting the chance to meddle with one of

the fastest cars on Earth. But his wife, after flashing an initial smile to waiting photographers, looked decidedly fed up with the rest of the visit to McLaren's Formula One racing plant in Surry.

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Surgeon shot over 'nothing'

Benjamin Dalton, a 29-year-old British surgeon, was shot dead in an argument "over nothing" with a policeman at a check-point in the Congo.

Diana Dalton said: "Benjamin grabbed me by the arms and said 'Run'. I heard a number of shots and thought 'My God they are going to kill us'. I saw Benjamin fall. I bent down to him and saw the blood running down his back. He just opened his eyes and died in my arms." Page 3

Soap star

Sid Shaw won his High Court battle against America's Elvis Presley industry for the right to carry on selling Presley novelties from his east London shop. The judge liked Mr Shaw's soap so much that he took a bar home. Page 7

Thatcher archive to join Churchill's at Cambridge

By ALAN HAMILTON

BARONESS THATCHER announced yesterday that she is giving her archive of personal and political papers on permanent loan to Churchill College, Cambridge, to allow scholars to study the longest premiership of the 20th century.

More than 1,000 boxes of documents, videos, photographs and personal effects will be handed over for safe keeping in the college strong-rooms, where they will join the archive of Lady Thatcher's hero, Sir Winston Churchill. The Thatcher Foundation has been keeping the documents at its London office while their owner wrote her memoirs and has rebuffed many approach-

Scholars will not, however, have immediate and unlimited access to the papers. Many will be covered by the Government's 30-year rule on the opening of state papers and historians anxious to unearth the secrets of the Falklands War, the poll tax revolt or the 1984 miners' strike — three milestones of the Thatcher era likely to be of particular interest — will have to be patient or persuade the Cabinet Office to make exceptions.

The Thatcher Foundation is anxious to avoid the debacle that surrounded the Churchill archive two years ago, when Sir Winston's grandson and

Continued on page 2, col 4

Zaire braced for military takeover

FROM SAM KILEY IN KINSHASA

THE prospects of a military coup in Zaire grew yesterday after the Parliament passed a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister.

Opposition MPs said they had the backing of military leaders and would appoint a successor to Leon Kengo wa Dondo "very soon".

At the same time, several members of President Mobutu Sese Seko's family were reported to have fled across the River Congo to Brazzaville, apparently fearing that they would be priority targets either for the army or a popular uprising in support of the rebel leader Laurent Kabila.

The President is being treated for cancer in Monaco.

Mr Kabila's forces are about 200 miles east, but the tension after the rebels' weekend victory at Kisangani is a further sign that Mr Mobutu's 31-year rule is close to an end.

The vote against Mr Kengo — who left for talks in Nairobi yesterday — narrowly missed the three-quarters majority necessary to remove him from office, but opposition leaders said that his administration would be unable to function as they would ask the army to take over the central bank.

Many believe that the military could fill the vacuum left by a government unable to run the war effort and forbidden by the President from negotiating with Mr Kabila.

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Apples lose their appeal as Britons go bananas

By MICHAEL HORNSBY
AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENT

BANANAS, once an exotic luxury item, have replaced apples as Britain's most popular fresh fruit, with about five billion eaten every year.

It is a far cry from the dark days of the Second World War when beleaguered Britons had to satisfy their craving for the fruit with a concoction of mashed parsnips flavoured with sugar and banana essence. Bananas were unavailable from 1939 to 1945, and for children born during those years, the fruit was such a novelty that the Attlee Government distributed one free to everyone under the age of 18 when the first postwar supplies arrived.

The banana-eating habit recovered strongly, but really took off only in the past 15 years when the fruit was marketed as a convenient health food that was high in energy and low in calories. The average banana contains three times as much potassium as any other fruit, carotene and vitamins A, B6 and E.

Consumption of bananas averaged 185g per person per week last year, compared with 175g for apples, according to a report by the Ministry of Agriculture. Until last year, apples had held the top position since records began in 1940. Now, however, Britons are eating an average two bananas a week compared with one apple.

Bananas — strictly speaking, a species

of herb rather than a tree — are among the oldest cultivated plants in the world. They are thought to have originated in South-East Asia and are mentioned in a Buddhist text dating from around 600 BC.

Alexander the Great was probably the first European to eat a banana, tasting the fruit in India during his voyages of conquest. Arab traders are credited with bringing bananas to the Holy Land, Egypt and Africa. The word *banana* is Arabic for "finger". By the 16th century the fruit had reached the Caribbean.

Bananas came to Europe only in the late-19th century after the emergence of the refrigerated steam ship. The first commercial consignment of 20,000 bunches landed in September 1888.

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Soapbox John breaks out again, armed and dangerous

Major's minders may care to note that to get their man's adrenalin flowing, all they need do is drive him to a market square anywhere in England and invite a crowd of yobs to shout at him for an hour. Back from Luton, the Prime Minister entered the Chamber spoiling for a fight.

John Major seems to have moved on in his imagination from the Commons chamber, and is now permanently on his soapbox. There were moments at Prime Minister's Questions when he looked ready to grab the Dispatch box, fling it to the floor and stand on it. Tony

MATTHEW PARBIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

Minister had even attacked Simon Hughes. Attacking Mr Hughes (Lib Dem, Southwark & Bermondsey) is the political equivalent of stoning the budge.

A decent, earnest, harmless man, who does go on a bit, Hughes's question got rather bogged down. He had begun: "The Prime Minister made a uniquely personal decision to call the election for 1 May..." "We know that!" shouted a

Tory heckler. Undeterred, Hughes twirled on. Parliament was to be "prorogued this Friday," he declared.

"We know that too!" came the heckle. But still he chirped. "What a windbag!" shouted the Tories. Miss Boothroyd interrupted the birdsong to beg him to "spit it out". He finally did. He wanted to know why the PM had arranged for the House to rise on Friday. Major snapped back that it

was to give him time to finish his question.

Major was not alone in his rush of pre-election aggression. Something seems to have happened to Stephen Dorrell in recent weeks which, to long-standing Dorrell-watchers, is rather disturbing. Previously a rational man, the Health Secretary now does little but shout.

At Health Questions yesterday, he started a sort of playground chant. Unlike the Opposition (he yelled) this Government was pledged to increase NHS spending "year on year, on year, on year, on year". All the Tory crawlers

behind him took up the refrain in mockingbird chorus: "year, on year, on year, on year" they bawled. Then Mr Dorrell tried it again. The Tories would increase spending, as they had over the last 18 years, "year, on year, on year, on year..."

For a dreadful moment we

thought Dorrell was going to repeat this eighteen times. The

stunt was stupid, the effect

displeasing.

This palpable Left-winger is

hoping to earn his spurs among the thug tendency in his party by playing King of the Kids. He should remember what happened to the last

Tory Wet who tried this

NEWS IN BRIEF

Teachers warn of boycott on reports

Teachers yesterday threatened to boycott national curriculum assessments and called for a ten-fold increase in the number of pupils expelled and sent to special schools. Failure to cut "unnecessary" assessment and report-writing would lead to a ballot on a boycott within a year, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers said.

The union's also called for the limit on an unpromised teacher's salary to rise to £30,000. In return, teachers would be accept tougher checks on competence.

CSA complaints

The Whitehall ombudsman dealt with more complaints about the Child Support Agency than any other branch of government. They represented a quarter of the total caseload of almost 2,000 complaints, according to the annual report from Michael Buckley, the newly appointed ombudsman.

Island offer

Islanders in Harris, in the Hebrides, have been offered a possible £12 million by landowners to accept a giant opencast quarry. The offer, over its 60-year life, is 2p per tonne of minerals sold. The quarry operators have already offered a community trust fund of £140,000 a year at peak production.

Water all-clear

More than 300,000 homes in parts of Hertfordshire and north London have been told they no longer have to boil their water, which had been contaminated with a bacterium. Three Valleys Water said that samples taken over the past five days had shown no trace of the cryptosporidium bug.

Prison inquest

A diabetic thief was found dead two days after being sent to Lincoln jail; an inquest was told yesterday. Brett Hay, 31, of Ipswich, had telephoned his wife hours earlier, saying he would die unless she alerted the authorities, but her efforts to contact his solicitor on a Sunday last July failed. The hearing continues.

Smile wiped off

A sculptor has redesigned a bronze relief of the Queen, which is due to unveil at a Nottinghamshire school, after he was advised not to show her smiling. Sir Andrew Buchanan, Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, was unhappy with Gordon Brown's work because it showed the Queen's teeth.

Suspect revealed

Video still pictures of a sex attacker suspected of 19 assaults on women in the West Midlands were released by police. The images were taken by a camera inside a cash machine in Birmingham where he used credit cards stolen from a victim. Police believe he has been hiding since his attacks were featured on BBC's *Crimewatch*.

Wife tells husband dead in

Major denies he sabotaged report on MP's sleaze

BY ANDREW PIERCE, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

LABOUR and Liberal Democrat MPs expressed dismay yesterday that the report by Sir Gordon Downey, the standards commissioner, into the "cash-for-questions" affair will be kept a secret until after the general election.

John Major's decision to prorogue Parliament on Friday scuppered the publication of the Downey report into allegations against Neil Hamilton, a former minister, and other Tory MPs. Sir Gordon, who began his inquiry in October, when he was urged by the Speaker to conclude a swift investigation, is expected to complete the 150-page dossier early next week. Because of the prorogation, the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges, which was to have considered the report, will have disbanded.

In the Commons yesterday, Mr Major denied that the imminent publication of the report had influenced his timing of the election announcement and hence of when Parliament would rise. He said that he had had "no knowledge" of when Sir Gordon was to present his report to the select committee which is chaired by Tony Newton, the Leader of the Commons. After the election, the Nolan committee, set up by Mr Major to report on standards



Downey: publication was expected next week

in public life, will produce a report on the performance of Sir Gordon and of the privates committee. The failure to publish the cash-for-questions report will dominate the Nolan inquiry. Sir Gordon has investigated allegations that MPs received cash to table questions in the Commons. He also looked at payments to 30 MPs fighting funds from the lobbyist Ian Greer.

Sir Gordon's report will not be seen by any MPs or the people to whom it refers. It will be locked in a safe in his office until after the campaign.

Members of the Standards Committee were furious at the postponement of publication. Nigel Jones, Liberal Democrat MP for Cheltenham, said:

"Serious allegations have surfaced in the media against MPs that will not be answered before polling day.

In future, an independent organisation should investigate. Self-regulation of MPs by MPs does not work."

The Tory leadership, which had been braced for damaging headlines on the eve of the election, will be relieved that time has run out for Sir Gordon. Labour, which had hoped to capitalise on Tory "sleaze", will be infuriated.

Other Tory MPs under investigation include Michael Brown, MP for Brigg & Cleethorpes, Tim Smith, MP for Beaconsfield, and Sir Michael Grylls, who is retiring as MP for Surrey North West.

Labour accused the Prime Minister of opting for a six-week election campaign, to avoid further damaging "sleaze" disclosures. Brian Wilson, Labour's campaign spokesman, said that the country was wondering why there was to be such a long campaign. "Perhaps we now have the reason. If Mr Major had allowed Parliament to hang around for another week he would have been facing what is potentially the most explosive report on the conduct of MPs this century."

Leading article, page 19



Thatcher papers on loan

Continued from page 1
namesake, the Conservative MP for Davyhulme, put the papers up for sale despite their long-term residence in the college named after his grandfather. Eventually, the papers were bought for the nation with a £12.5 million National

Lottery grant. A spokesman for Lady Thatcher said yesterday that her children Mark and Carol were delighted with the Churchill College arrangement. Their mother has given the college £25,000 to begin cataloguing her papers.

GORDON BROWN and Kenneth Clarke clashed yesterday over Labour's proposed windfall tax on privatised utilities amid renewed confusion over which companies might have to pay the levy.

While sources close to Gordon Brown said that the airports operator BAA and British Telecom would be liable for the tax, other leadership figures insisted it was unlikely that these two firms would be affected.

Mr Clarke said the tax would present a "serious threat" to the country's continued recovery by imposing higher energy charges on both industry and consumers. The Chancellor said it was a "disgrace" that Mr Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, still refused to name the companies that would be affected by the tax which is expected to be introduced within weeks of a Labour election victory.

Mr Brown said he would not name the firms, because it would only be fair to do so in government after consultation with the regulators. His aides said the tax could apply to all utilities privatised since 1979 which were regulated by statute.

The party's legal advisers say that Labour cannot name individual companies as this would be seen as unfair discrimination and could affect the markets. But Mr Brown's aides insisted that any regulated and licensed privatised

utility would be liable to be taxed if it made excess profits.

British Telecommunications,

the airports operator BAA and

British Telecom would be

liable for the tax, other leader-

ship figures insisted it was

unlikely that these two firms

would be affected.

But some sources later said it was unlikely that BT or BAA would have to pay. "All companies are liable, but that does not mean that all have to pay," said one. "Gas, electricity and water companies are the most likely to be hit."

Later Labour seized on an

all-party committee report on

how the energy industries

have been controlled and regu-

lated as justification for the

windfall tax.

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CDs are new weapon in supermarket price war

BY ADRIAN LEE

A PRICE war has erupted between supermarkets which are offering big discounts on Top 40 compact discs in an effort to win a larger share of the lucrative music market.

The cost of some chart albums has been cut to less than £10 as chains including Asda, Tesco and Safeway compete to encourage customers to buy their food and music under the same roof.

The aggressive discounting has upset traditional music outlets but has been welcomed by consumer groups. Asda is now the fourth-biggest music retailer and has seen nearly a 25 per cent rise in music sales in the past year. Tesco claims its chart CD prices are the cheapest in the country.

"Marketing opportunities on the food side are more difficult, so supermarkets are looking at other areas," an Asda spokesman said. Its biggest stores now stock more than 2,000 titles and it is introducing signing sessions by bands and listening posts where customers can hear albums before they buy.

A Tesco spokesman said: "We are taking CD sales extremely seriously. All our research shows that custom-



HOW PRICES COMPARE

	Asda	Tesco	Safeway	Woolworths	Virgin	HMV, New York	FNAC, Paris
Definitely Maybe, Oasis	£11.99	£13.99	£15.99	£14.99	£13.49	£10.85	£8.30
Spice, the Spice Girls	£10.99	£12.99 (red to £10.99)	£12.99	£12.99	£13.99	£12.99	£12.73

ers now want to buy CDs, books and videos while they are doing their food shopping." The store said yesterday that it would cut the price of the Spice Girls album *Spice* by £2 to £10.99 after learning that Asda was charging £10.99. This week Safeway is offering two Top 10 CDs for £20.

A source at one high street record shop said: "There is no

range of albums they stocked. A typical Our Price shop has 10,000 titles. A spokesman for Virgin and Our Price added: "You are not going to get specialist knowledge from a Tesco check-out girl."

Phil Evans, senior policy officer for the Consumers' Association, welcomed the price battle. "Supermarkets are to be congratulated for being so aggressive on price. The record companies and high street record shops have been allowed to get away with high prices for too long."

He said there was no evidence that supermarket price-cutting in the United States had harmed the music industry there. US prices are generally two thirds of those in Britain.

In 1994 the Monopolies and Mergers Commission cleared record companies of overcharging and collusion. The companies say the price difference in Britain and the US is comparable to other goods.

The CD trade has grown to £800 million a year since its launch in 1983. The retailer receives £4.05 from a CD costing £14.99; the record company gets £5.07; the manufacturer £1.05; producer 46p; publisher 46p; artist 98p; composer 68p; VAT £2.24.

way they can be making money on some of these prices. The supermarkets are just going for chart stuff so ultimately it will be bad for the music industry because some smaller shops could be forced out of business." Another specialist store said: "The supermarkets are being irresponsible. It is worrying for us."

Shops such as Virgin and Our Price emphasised the



The Restorick family stand in silence at the checkpoint where Stephen was shot dead by an IRA sniper

Family visit spot where soldier died

THE parents of Stephen Restorick, the young soldier who was shot dead by an IRA sniper in Northern Ireland last month, yesterday visited the spot where he was killed (Nicholas Watt writes).

John and Rita Restorick fought back tears as they laid flowers at the checkpoint in the village of Bessbrook, Co Armagh, where their son died on the evening of February 12. Accompanied by relatives, including their other son, Mark, and two army officers, Mr and

Mrs Restorick walked hand-in-hand to the checkpoint where 50 floral tributes have been tied to a fence in memory of the 23-year-old lance bombardier.

After standing in silence for a few minutes, Mrs Restorick stepped forward to lay a simple spray of flowers with the message: "Dear Son and Brother. We miss you now and forever. Love Mum, Dad and Mark." The family, from Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, then walked along the road out of Bessbrook and looked over the hillside from where the IRA sniper is believed to have fired.

Later at the army base they attended a service to dedicate a memorial to their son. Forty members of the soldier's Eagle Battery from the 3rd Battalion Royal Horse Artillery joined them. The Rev John Ritson, the army chaplain, said the presence of troops in the Province allowed people to live without intimidation. "Stephen's life was lost actually fighting for the freedom of others."

Train drivers told to ignore body to prevent delays

BY A STAFF REPORTER

THE body of a young woman was left lying on a railway track for nearly four hours so that rush-hour services would not be delayed. Up to 20 train drivers were ordered to take their trains over her.

Yesterday the train drivers' union Aslef said that their members were "traumatised" by the incident on Great Eastern line between Shenfield and Southend in Essex. The union accused the rail operator of being motivated by the need to avoid penalty payments for delays.

However, Great Eastern said that the decision to keep trains running was taken in co-operation with police and Railtrack in the interests of rush-hour travellers. In the

Commons, Gwyneth Dunwoody, a Labour member of the Transport Select Committee, called for a government statement on the incident, which she described as "barbarism".

The woman had been knocked down by a train at about 5.15am on February 6. Her body was removed about 9am.

Revealing the incident yesterday, Lew Adams the Aslef general secretary, said in the union's *Locomotive Journal*: "Some 15 to 20 drivers had the traumatic experience of being instructed to pass over her body, lying in the 4ft between the rails with just a cover thrown over it. All this was done to prevent profit and

Birmingham Six sue MP Evans

BY RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

THE Birmingham Six issued a writ for libel yesterday on the Conservative MP David Evans over comments he allegedly made in an interview with sixth formers in his constituency.

Benedict Birnberg, solicitor for the six men, said they had been severely distressed by remarks that appeared to question their innocence of terrorist incidents.

He added: "We are seeking damages and an injunction preventing him from saying these things again."

Mr Birnberg said that he had written to Mr Evans earlier this month, but, when no reply was received, a writ was issued and served on Mr Evans's solicitors. The scale of

the damages to be sought would depend on Mr Evans's attitude from this point, he

Mr Evans, Conservative MP for Welwyn and Hatfield, North Hertfordshire, talked to pupils last month at Stanborough School in Welwyn Garden City.

During his address he reportedly criticised John Major as " vindictive and not forgiving" and labelled Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, as "dead from the neck upwards", a remark for which he later apologised.

The Birmingham Six — Gerry Hunter, Paddy Hill, Hugh Callaghan, Richard McIlkenny, Billy Power and John Walker — spent 17 years in prison until the Court of Appeal quashed their convictions in 1994.

Their lawyers are seeking a judicial review to finalise compensation claims for the time they spent in jail wrongly convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

Last week it emerged that Mr Hunter had been offered £510,000. Mr Birnberg said: "Their compensation has still not been settled, although substantial interim payments have been made."

Gasworks bomb man has case sent to Appeal Court

BY RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

THE case of a petty thief serving 16 years for his part in an IRA bomb attack is to be reviewed by the Court of Appeal after new evidence was sent to the Home Office.

John Kinsella, who is in Full Sutton top-security jail near York, has served three years of a sentence imposed for storing explosives for an IRA cell that blew up the Warrington gasworks in 1993. Kinsella, 52, has protested his innocence ever since his conviction in 1994 for possession of Semtex.

He had hidden the explosives for his nephew, Denis Kinsella, and Pairic MacPhloinn under a plaque for bonfires on a friend's allotment, for £200.

John Kinsella, from Nottingham, who was originally from Dublin and had lived in Britain for 30 years, claimed that he had not known that the bag he hid contained 7.5kg of Semtex, guns and ammunition, which was why he buried them under a place used for bonfires. He says that he had thought the bag contained silverware.

He was originally jailed for 20 years for his part in the bomb attack but that was reduced on appeal to 16. The latest hearing of the case is expected in the autumn.

Michael McCloskey, his solicitor, said yesterday that new material had been put to the Home Office relating to whether Kinsella was aware that what he hid was explosives.

Lawyers will also argue that a photograph of Kinsella's son standing in front of a plaque commemorating the death of Louis Scallion, an IRA man, shot in 1972, should not have been used at the trial as it was prejudicial.

Mr McCloskey said: "The picture had no political meaning for Mr Kinsella and was just for background to link him with the IRA. It is the kind of picture you would see in



John Kinsella: "did not know about Semtex"

many nationalist homes in Ireland."

Yesterday Paddy Loftus, the leader of the campaign to have the case referred to the Appeal Court said: "We have always strived to expose the truth and now we are happy that Michael Howard [the Home Secretary] has made the decision to refer this case back to the Court of Appeal and look at all the facts again. All we have asked is for the full facts of the case to be put in front of the courts. Mr Howard has facilitated this process and we are grateful."

Two years ago Kinsella's sentence was reduced on the grounds that the original term did not reflect the fact that he was unconnected with the IRA.

At the appeal, a letter from MacPhloinn was given as evidence. It said Kinsella had been enlisted to support the cell because he was a "petty criminal who would do anything for money".

MacPhloinn, an IRA bomb-maker, is serving 35 years for leading the bombing mission that devastated Warrington gasworks. Denis Kinsella is serving 25 years. MacPhloinn, 43, a researcher with a firm of lawyers in Dublin, had prepared the bombs in a flat in Nottingham where Denis Kinsella lived.

Abusive episode lands Australian neighbour in court

BY A STAFF REPORTER

AN Australian who moved to England in search of a country idyll forgot the advice of his country's successful soap opera — that good neighbours should be good friends — and abused them instead.

Ollie Kingspark, delivered angry tirades over the garden fence, posted offensive placards complaining of racism, and kicked in the door of his rented 17th-century cottage in the hamlet of Turleigh, Wiltshire.

Kingspark, 45, his wife Georgia, 43 and their two children emigrated to England in 1995 to open a lingerie shop in Bath and moved into a honey-coloured hillside property in Turleigh, population 120. Within weeks they had fallen foul of the Curris family next door after complaining about their bonfires.

Kingspark is said to have sworn at the Curris children, disrupted their barbecue and erected a sign saying "Australian family discriminated against by racist village". When Malcolm Curris called to try to resolve the feud, Kingspark swore and called him a "wimp and pomme" and then pushed him.

West Wiltshire magistrates were told yesterday that such was Kingspark's behaviour

during the barbecue that parents refused to allow their children to stay in tents in the garden overnight. Four months later the Kingsparks were evicted from their property but returned and kicked in the door.

Kingspark, who admitted two public order offences, criminal damage and assaulting his neighbour, was ordered to serve 100 hours' community service, pay £487 compensation for damage and £80 costs.

James Morton, for Kingspark, said the couple were desperate to return to Australia and denied ever hurling abuse at their neighbours.

"Mr Kingspark incurred severe racial discrimination because he and his wife are Australian."

Kingspark, who now lives in Upper Borough Walls, Bath, Somerset, said: "I came to England seeking the country life: the idyllic type of thing me and my wife thought existed in the areas where we had been living."

"Large numbers of people didn't want us here, I came from a multicultural area where we accept other people — but you English are the most xenophobic people I have come across."

Sir Geoffrey Loftus, MP

A diary report (March 13) claimed Sir Geoffrey Loftus was to retire as MP for Pontefract and Castleford to make way for Alan Howard when the general election was called. A news report on Monday

repeated the suggestion of his impending retirement. Both reports were incorrect. We accept that Sir Geoffrey has no intention of standing down, and apologise for the embarrassment he has been caused.

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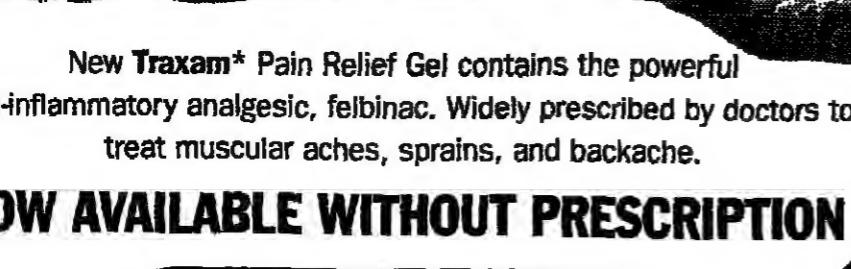
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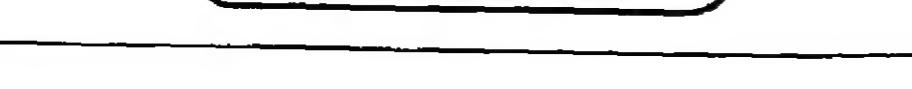
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Cricket boss stumped as behind is caught in beach competition

By STEPHEN FARRELL



MEMBERS of the country's oldest first-class cricket club whose eyes strayed from *Wisden* in the off-season were surprised to find the nude figure of their beleaguered club secretary gracing the pages of *British Naturism* magazine.

On the eve of Sussex County Cricket Club's annual general meeting, Nigel Bett's naked appearance in the glossy quarterly has distracted attention from his efforts to stop the club committee being swept away by a new regime.

Mr Bett, 57, posed for his wife Barbara on a beach in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, wearing just a strategically placed black-and-white scarf. They entered the picture in an annual British Naturism competition offering £100, £50 and £25 prizes for the best photograph by a reader.

Although they failed to land a prize, the picture proved ideal to illustrate an article by another naturist on the joys of strolling naked among the island's drifting sand dunes and shrub-covered hillocks.

The chances of identification were slim. Mr Bett appeared from the rear only, was not named, and the magazine has a circulation of just 12,000 members who pay the £20 family or £16 single subscription. However, one keen-eyed reader spotted his wife Barbara's name in the

Bett: "What people do in private life is up to them"

caption and alerted the *Brighton Evening Argus* newspaper, which featured the story prominently under the headline: "Cheeky pic leaves Nigel blushing."

Mr Bett admitted all, telling the paper: "This is a picture of me. It was taken by my wife. It is a place where people can sunbathe with their clothes off. I think what people do in their private lives is up to them."

Yesterday he did not turn up for work at the club, where weightier matters were under discussion. The former Sussex fast bowler Tony Pigott is trying to overthrow the board with a motion of no confidence, which will be raised at today's meeting and formally discussed at an extraordinary general meeting on April 8.

Sussex, founded in 1839, has never won the county champ-

ionship and was last runner-up in 1981. Its committee has long faced accusations of mishandling players and the club has recently fallen into crisis with the loss of six senior cricketers during the winter.

Mr Pigott said he had no plans to raise the nude picture at either meeting: "There are more serious matters facing Sussex, such as achieving the vote of no confidence and getting new faces and new ideas on the committee."

However, one angry member despaired at yet another round of unfavourable publicity: "This is the last thing we need. He should not be entering nude pictures in magazine competitions. He is supposed to be an ambassador for Sussex County Cricket Club."

Robert Griffiths, the club's marketing director, said: "I am not aware that we have received any complaints from our members. Our primary concern is to prepare for the meeting."

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Sussex, founded in 1839, has never won the county champ-

County in turmoil, page 48



Pete Townshend leaving the High Court yesterday

The Who guitarist clashes with lawyer for Bowbelle

PETE TOWNSHEND, leader of The Who, was accused yesterday of exaggerating the potential of a musician whose career was destroyed by the *Marchioness* riverboat disaster in order to boost her claim for compensation (Kathryn Knight writes).

Josephine Wells, 37, has been unable to work as a saxophonist since being trapped underwater for three minutes when the pleasure cruiser collided with the sand dredger *Bowbelle* on the Thames in August 1989.

Mr Townshend, 53, told the High Court that Ms Wells was an "absolutely exceptional" musician, "the best soprano saxophone player I have ever heard in pop", an unassuming figure who burst into life when she was playing.

Since working with her on a session for an album in 1986,

he told Mr Justice Kay, he had been quite intimidated by how good Ms Wells was and had never forgotten her.

"I was constantly looking out for her, I always wanted to know what she was up to," he said.

He added that he had written 20 hit records with The Who in a career that began in 1963, and had become a good judge of musicianship.

Mr Townshend was giving evidence on the second day of a damages claim by Ms Wells against the owners of the *Marchioness* and *Bowbelle*.

The court has been told that Ms Wells suffered severe

depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and had turned to alcohol since the disaster. In the 1980s she had toured with *The Communards* and *Tears for Fears*.

Mr Townshend said yesterday: "I'm really stuck in my mind. She was absolutely exceptional both technically and imaginatively. She was the best soprano saxophone player I have ever heard in pop, an unassuming figure who burst into life when she was playing."

Since working with her on a session for an album in 1986, he told Mr Justice Kay, he had been quite intimidated by how good Ms Wells was and had never forgotten her.

"I was constantly looking out for her, I always wanted to know what she was up to," he said.

He added that he had written 20 hit records with The Who in a career that began in 1963, and had become a good judge of musicianship.

The owners of the *Marchioness* and *Bowbelle* accept liability but are contesting the amount of damages, claiming Ms Wells was burnt out before the accident and had not played professionally for 18 months. The case continues.

Film censor gives green light to Crash

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

A CONTROVERSIAL film which explores the sexual gratification derived from seeing bodies mutilated in car crashes will be shown in Britain. David Cronenberg's *Crash*, inspired by J.G. Ballard's novel, received the green light yesterday from the British Board of Film Censors, which awarded it an "18" certificate without cuts.

The board went to great lengths to address fears about the effect that the violence and sexual perversions in the film could have on young, impressionable minds. James Ferman, the BBFC director, said that they had consulted a forensic psychologist "on the question of harm, particularly the link between sex and disability", and had a special screening for disabled people.

The BBFC, which has been criticised for awarding certificates to films such as *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Reservoir Dogs*, *Natural Born Killers*,

ers and *Kids*, also sought the advice of a QC with extensive experience in prosecuting and defending obscenity cases: "Our legal adviser took the view that, rather than sympathising or identifying with the attitudes or tastes of the characters in this film, the average viewer would in the end be repelled by them, and would reject the values and sexual perversions displayed."

The film's distributors, Columbia TriStar, said: "We are thrilled that the BBFC has finally given *Crash* the certificate. The film has opened all over the world without any cuts." An opening date has not yet been set.

CONNECTION

Julianne Selby, wife of Ralph Selby (obituary, yesterday) did not survive him, but died in 1994.

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NHS under fire for 'needless' Caesareans

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

WOMEN are being subjected to unnecessary Caesarean and forceps deliveries which cause them injury and waste resources, a health service watchdog says today.

Surgical and medical intervention in labour varies greatly among hospitals and is often driven by non-clinical considerations such as fear of litigation or convenience, the Audit Commission says.

An investigation of maternity services by the commission, which

included a survey of more than 2,000 mothers, found that more than 80 per cent were pleased with the care they received. Each delivery costs £1,700, a total bill for the NHS of £1.1 billion a year.

Shortcomings remain, however. The commission said that expectant women were not like other patients because they were generally in good health and often had firm views about the care they wanted. Many women felt they were not given enough information about tests they underwent during pregnancy and did not have an adequate say in

decisions about their care and the delivery.

The Audit Commission said that most NHS trusts offered too many antenatal checks to women with low-risk pregnancies who could be seen more cheaply in local clinics, which were the women preferred. Of the 13 NHS trusts surveyed, two thirds provided more than the nine checks recommended for first-time mothers with low-risk pregnancies, costing an extra £10 million.

One in four of the women said they had been left alone at a time during labour when they were

worried. Trusts argue that the fluctuating workload makes it difficult to ensure enough midwives are available at all times but the commission says flexible staffing is the key.

The commission found Caesarean rates varied from 11 to 18 per cent of deliveries among the trusts studied and instrumental deliveries, such as forceps, from 5 to 13 per cent. It says that Caesareans, which have doubled in the past 20 years, have "increased to a level that concerns clinicians". Many trusts make little use of the ventouse (suction) meth-

od, which causes less pain and injury to the mother than forceps.

The commission says: "The high levels of some procedures suggest they are being carried out on a routine basis... While medical factors are a major influence on levels of intervention, non-medical factors (such as fear of litigation, professional norms and convenience) play at least as great if not a greater part."

Postnatal care received the most critical comment from the mothers. A quarter said they were dissatisfied with the length of time they were

kept in hospital, most because they felt it was too long but some because they were not ready to be discharged.

Dr Jonathan Boyce, the Audit Commission's director of health studies, said: "Once the baby is out and well, hospitals are into a consumer choice area. Mothers feel they ought to be in charge but they aren't."

The Royal College of Obstetricians denied that the high Caesarean rate was due solely to non-medical factors and said it was a "more subtle" problem related to the balance of risks.

Scientists find gene of killer disease

BY NIGEL HAWKES
SCIENCE EDITOR

THE gene responsible for a rare disease that causes rapid mental decline and death in early childhood has been located by scientists at University College London.

Batten's disease came to prominence in 1993 when the parents of Rhys Daniels, then 2, threatened to sue the NHS over the closure of a unit where he had been promised a bone marrow transplant. The boy was subsequently given two transplants at another NHS centre but they failed to cure the disease.

The boy suffers from the late infant form of Batten's disease, of which there are believed to be between 30 and 40 cases in Britain at any one time. The scientists analysed blood samples from families affected by the disease and identified areas on two chromosomes where the genes responsible lie.

The next step, which is to identify precisely the genes, should make possible earlier and more reliable antenatal testing on parents known to be carriers of the disease.

Details of the discovery are given in *Human Molecular Genetics*. A member of the team, Dr Julie Sharp, believes that the findings may have wider implications for understanding mental decline. "Our research will provide further detail on the development of both the brain and the nervous system and may provide an insight into the ageing process," she said.

Rhys's father, Barry, said yesterday: "It is a huge leap forward, and now the concentration must be on finding a cure and saving the children."

Keyhole pioneer loses plea to practise

BY LIN JENKINS

A PIONEER of keyhole surgery techniques who was struck off the medical register after "repeated catastrophic failure as a surgeon" failed yesterday in his attempt to resume practising.

Nicholas Siddle, 47, from Limpsfield Chart, Surrey, sought reinstatement at a hearing of the General Medical Council, saying that he was "ashamed that standards of care to some of my patients fell grossly below the standards the public is entitled to expect". He had suffered personal problems when his premature twins died and then endured a bitter divorce but he had sought psychiatric help and learnt to be less arrogant.

The former consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology at University College Hospital, London, was struck off in 1995 after a series of failures. Over 15 months he damaged the bowels, bladders, ureters and wombs of seven women. Three operations involved laparoscopic techniques at the vanguard of keyhole surgery.

After the case had been considered for over an hour, Dr Jeremy Lee-Potter, chairman of the committee, told Mr Siddle simply that he would not be restored to the register. He is free to re-apply at a later date.

Dorrell orders investigation into children's deaths

BY JEREMY LAURANCE, HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

AN INQUIRY was ordered yesterday into the heart surgery service for children run by an NHS trust after a report disclosed that one surgeon had a death rate four times higher than his colleagues.

Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, announced the inquiry into the Bristol Royal Infirmary after a review published yesterday criticised the "poor" surgical performance of James Wisheart.

Mr Wisheart, former medical director of the United Bristol Hospitals Trust, which includes the infirmary, announced his retirement from the NHS on Monday, 24 hours before publication of the review. He voluntarily stopped operating last December and had resigned as medical director.

The review by independent experts of 2,500 patients operated on by the surgical team at the infirmary from 1993-95, found Mr Wisheart's performance was "significantly poorer" than his colleagues and his "operative mortality figures" were too high.

The review recommended that he should not resume operating. It disclosed that 12.2 per cent of patients who had a coronary bypass operation performed by Mr Wisheart died within 30 days compared with the 2.6 per cent average mortality rate of his colleagues.

The review came after concern over the hospital's record on child heart surgery after it was revealed that nine of thirteen babies died when undergoing controversial "switch" operations — involving the transposition of the two main arteries to the heart — and other surgical techniques to repair heart defects at the hospital between 1990 and 1995.

Hugh Ross, chief executive of the trust, said the review had given a "clear vote of confidence" in the trust's clinical audit system and in the adult cardiac service. Its performance was "in line with the published average figures for UK cardiac surgical units as a whole".

Mr Wisheart and his colleague Janardan Dhasmana are the subject of complaints under investigation by the General Medical Council.

Mr Dorrell said that the inquiry into the trust, to examine the specialist cardiac surgical services for children from 1990 to 1995, would not begin until the GMC's inquiry was complete.

The Select Committee on Health says that services for young people who are mentally ill are failing to meet the need. Mental health problems are

growing but services remain "patchy" and unable to cope.



Mental health services for young cannot cope

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

THE Department of Health was sharply criticised by MPs yesterday for failing to ensure proper help is provided to children and adolescents with mental health problems such as eating disorders.

The Select Committee on Health says that services for young people who are mentally ill are failing to meet the need. Mental health problems are

growing but services remain "patchy" and unable to cope.

It says the Health Department's ignorance of the number or geographical distribution of beds for those suffering from eating disorders is "unacceptable". At least 1 per cent of girls aged between 15 and 19 are severely affected and one in ten of the sufferers dies of starvation or suicide. "The NHS Executive cannot begin to design, still less to implement, a strategy to ensure an adequate regional distri-

bution of services if it does not collect in current provision," it says.

The committee was concerned that although the department supported the principle of a four-tier approach to children's mental health problems, with services ranging from general advice from family doctors to specialised in-patient treatment, it had no idea of what extent that had been implemented.

It says the Health Department, in its *Health of the Nation* strategy, should

include targets for reducing the suicide rate among young people.

However, the Health Department was congratulated for giving more prominence to issues of child and adolescent mental health in recent years and for issuing guidance to health and local authorities.

The Mental Health Foundation said that more investment in mental health services for the young was needed in order to avoid "massive problems for society in the future".

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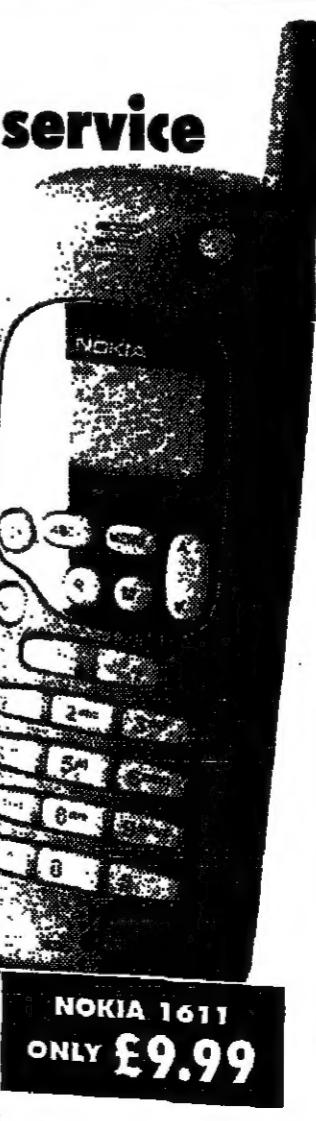
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Elvis soap seller rocks Memphis

East Ender
overturns US
company's
monopoly on
musical icon

BY EMMA WILKINS

A FORMER barrow boy yesterday won his High Court battle against America's Elvis Presley industry over the right to sell novelty soaps and trinkets to fans in Britain.

Sid Shaw, 50, who runs an Elvis Presley memorabilia business from a shop in Shoreditch, east London, said he was delighted that his "David and Goliath" battle was over after 14 years of litigation.

Mr Justice Laddie, sitting in the Chancery Division, ruled that Elvis Presley Enterprises Incorporated (EPEI), of Memphis, Tennessee, was not entitled to register three trademarks to sell trinkets and memorabilia in Britain. The judge, who liked Mr Shaw's Elvis Presley soap (£1) so much that he took a bar home during the two-day hearing, ruled that EPEI did not own "in any meaningful sense the words Elvis or Elvis Presley".

After the ruling, Mr Shaw said: "Elvis is up there somewhere smiling today. This shows that the little guys can take on the big guys and still win. The bigger they are, the harder they fall."

"Mr Justice Laddie is clearly an Elvis Presley fan. He should be made honorary president of the fan club."

Mr Shaw, who worked in Petticoat Lane market as a boy before reading economics at Essex University, founded his company, ElvisYours, in



Two for the show: Sid Shaw, left, and Leyton Sommors outside the High Court yesterday. Mr Shaw said the judge was clearly an Elvis fan

1978 and faced his first legal action from EPEI in 1983 over the rights to sell memorabilia in America. "I have had nothing but grief from these people for 14 years but now I've got British justice," he said.

"They think they are omnipotent because they have all the money, but if you have guts and determination and believe in your fight, then you can win."

EPEI, which is the legal successor to Elvis Presley under American law, was yesterday considering whether

to appeal. Peter Prescott, for EPEI, had argued that when people bought souvenirs of their heroes they wanted them to come from a "genuine source".

The judge said that Presley would not be entitled to the sole rights to his name even if he were still alive. "He would not be entitled to stop a fan from naming his son, his dog or goldfish, his car or his house 'Elvis' or 'Elvis Presley', simply by reason of the fact that it was the name given to him at birth by his parents

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that it was the name given to

him at birth by his parents

There is nothing akin to

copyright in a name."

The judge added: "Just as

Elvis Presley did not own his

name so as to be able to

prevent all and any uses of it

by third parties, so Enter-

prises can have no greater

rights. Similarly, Presley did

not own his appearance. For

example, during his life he

could not prevent a fan from

having a tattoo put on his

chest which looked like him."

The judgment overturned a

Trademark Registry ruling in

February last year which

granted EPEI the trademarks

Elvis, Elvis Presley, and Elvis

Presley as a signature on

toiletry goods in Britain.

Mr Shaw was wearing his

favourite Elvis Presley watch

(£29.95) for the hearing. A

picture of Elvis appears on the

face of the "magic" watch,

then disappears, every 15 seconds.

It is one of 400 items, including

Are You, Lonesome

Tonight? Knickers, which Mr

Shaw supplies to retail outlets

throughout the world including

Blackpool Pleasure Beach,

the Elvis Presley Inn in Jerusa-

lem, and Madame Tussaud's.

Mr Shaw, who has sold

goods worth £3 million be-

tween 1979 and 1991, now

hopes to increase his turnover

to £5 million a year. "Maybe I

can float ElvisYours on the

stock market," he said. Before

returning to his shop, he

stopped to embrace Leyton

Sommors, 62, an Elvis Presley

impersonator from Manches-

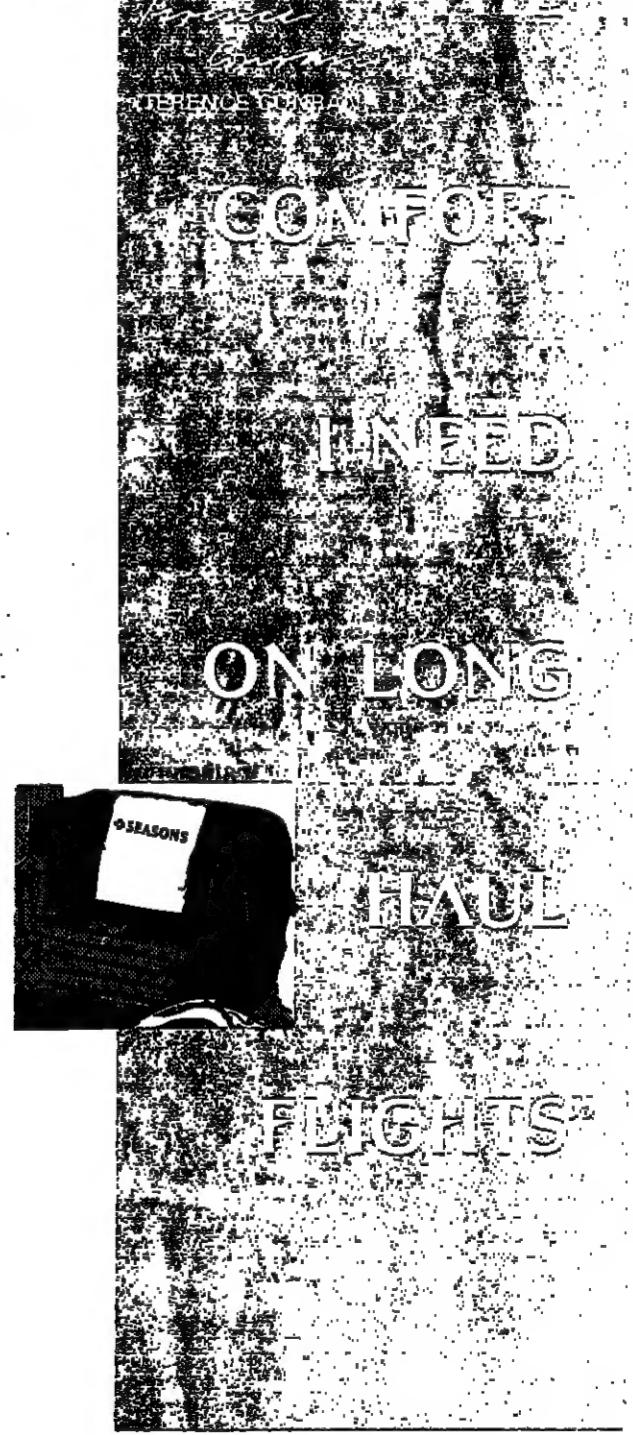
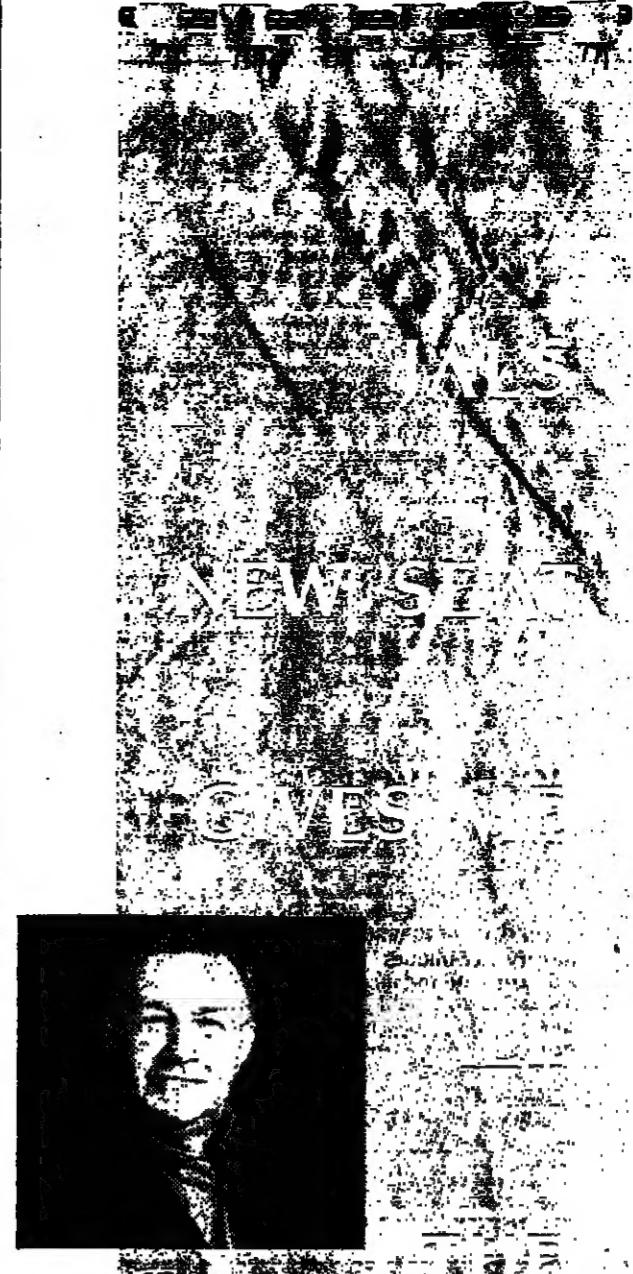
ter who said it was his "trage-

dy" to look like the singer. "If

you look like someone you

have to give up your own life,"

Mr Sommors said.



Asda's wings are clipped in Penguin biscuit battle

BY DANIEL McGROarty

ITS wings clipped, the Puffin limped on to the endangered species list yesterday after being defeated by the Penguin in a fight for nesting rights on shop shelves.

Their seven-day spat in the High Court had caused much amusement, Mr Justice Walker conceded yesterday, but he emphasised that a multi-million-pound business was at stake in the battle between rival chocolate biscuits. He

ruled that the supermarket chain Asda was guilty of passing off its cheaper own-brand Puffin biscuit as having something to do with United Biscuits' 60-year-old best-selling Penguin brand.

Puffins may yet take wing

again as Asda intends to

appeal. The judge ruled it

could continue to use the

brand name but would have

to change its packaging.

The judge cleared Asda of

infringing United Biscuits' registered trademarks — the

word Penguin and pictures of

the bird — giving Puffin-lovers a partial victory. He

agreed to give Asda a 35-day

stay of execution pending an

appeal, after hearing that the

supermarket has five weeks'

stock of biscuits, worth

£350,000, to sell.

Thumbing through the 36-

page written judgment punc-

tuating with cartoon penguins

and puffins, an Asda spokes-

man made it clear that even if

the appeal is lost the Puffin

will not vanish but will take

on new plumage.

The judge admitted that he

had to consult ornithological

handbooks in making clear

his distinction between the

birds, referring to the penguin

as "ungainly and fat and

doubting whether the average

member of the public

knows much more about the

puffin that it is a seabird with

a multicoloured beak".

He agreed that the cartoon

puffin could be mistaken for a

cartoon penguin", but added:

"Had the Asda product been

called, for example, 'Bison' (to

take another name from the

original list of possibilities),

with a cartoon picture of a

brown woolly bison on the

packaging, then these pro-

ceedings could not possibly

succeed."

There was lengthy discus-

sion over the wording of

Penguin's famous stuttering

slogan — "P... P... P... Pick

up... a Penguin" — as Iain

Purvis, for Asda, insisted that

the supermarket had never

intended to imitate the style in

its promotions.

The judge granted an injunc-

tion against continued

passing-off by Asda after con-

cluding that the Puffin's

"packaging and get-up" was

deceptively similar to those of

Penguin", although he did not

believe this was intentional.

Outside the High Court, bar-

risters had to step aside as

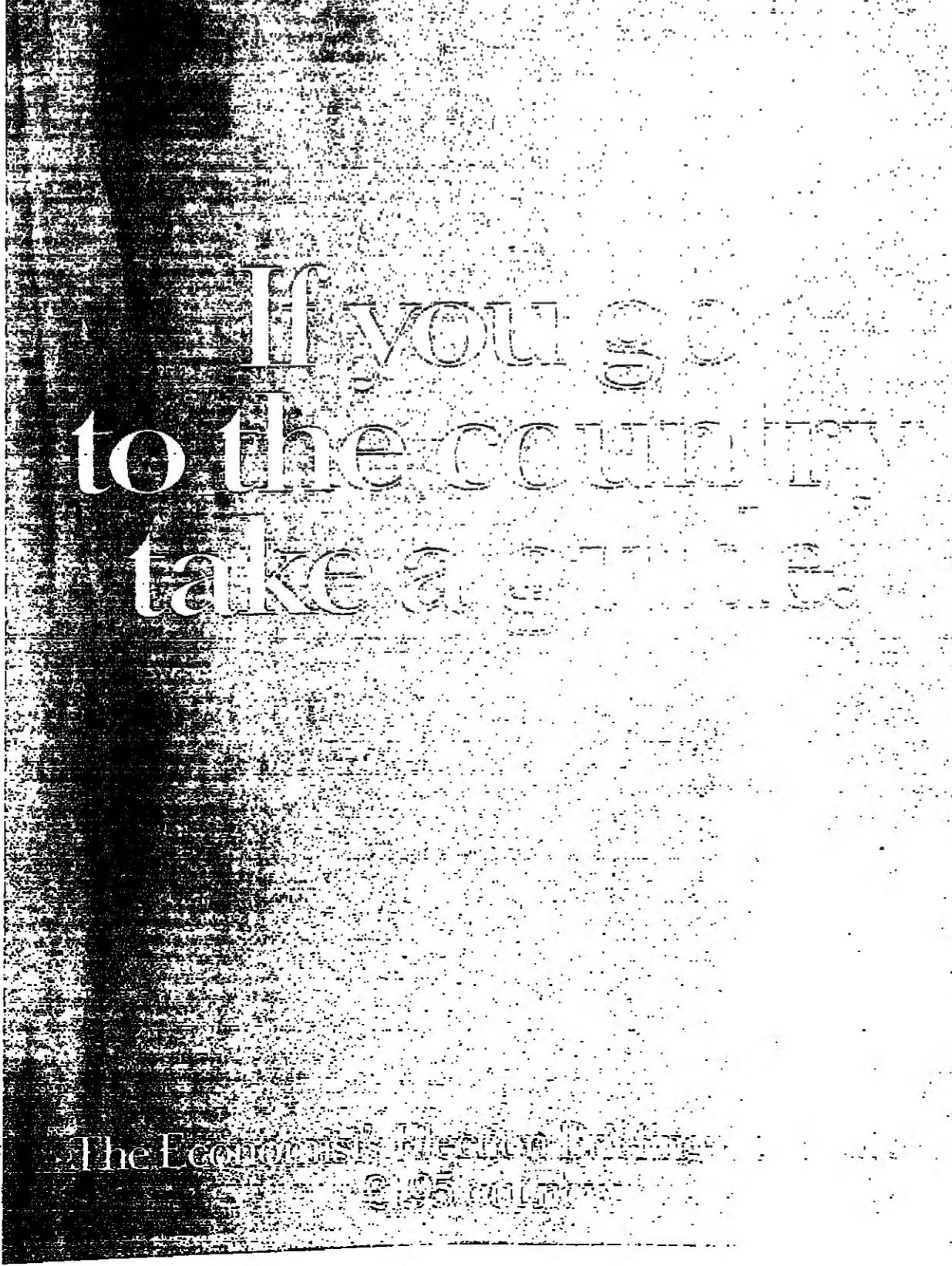
two life-size costumed figures

of the rival birds shook hands

for television cameras before

both sides flew off to prepare

to do battle again.



Keep
your eye
on the
ball...



See following pages
for details



Leaders to face the nation in series of screen tests

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

THE leaders of the three main political parties may not yet have agreed to take part in a televised debate, but they are making sure that no section of the television audience is ignored in a series of appearances on the BBC.

Last night the BBC confirmed that John Major, Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown will each be interviewed individually on *Panorama* by David Dimbleby in the run-up to the election. The three leaders will also appear on *Question Time*, which no serving Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition has previously agreed to do.

However, Chris Capron, who has been on the programme before, will appear individually, rather than in a panel, taking questions from the studio audience alone.

To try to attract first-time voters, the leaders have also

agreed to appear individually on Radio 1.

Peter Jay, the BBC's economics editor, will present a programme called *Debate for Chancellor*, which will bring Kenneth Clarke, Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor and Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrat Treasury spokesman, head to head. The three will also appear, in turn, on Channel 4's *Power and the People*, where they will face questioning from 300 members of the public.

Mr Clarke has agreed to do four television debates with his rivals next month. The Chancellor is quite happy to take on both Mr Brown and Mr Bruce. Mr Brown has been less accommodating, agreeing to only two programmes. His aides say that, as Labour's campaign supreme, he is unlikely to have time to do more.

Mr Clarke has also agreed in principle to a three-way debate on BBC 1's *On the Record* on April 20, and an independent production, *Power and the People*, to be shown on Channel 4 on April 27, where the three Treasury men

will be given a slot each and questioned by the audience. Details are being finalised.

Sports and showbusiness personalities will get their chance to question the leaders in a programme presented by the comedian Dennis Pennis, *The Enormous Election with Dennis Pennis*. The interviews will be intercut with footage of Dennis walking through the Commons linking popular programmes with key issues.

Tony Hall, chief executive of news at the BBC, said that the BBC hoped to help people to make sense of the election. "In a general election, which will rely heavily on communicating via the media, particularly the electronic media, it is crucial that the electorate feels its trust in BBC values of impartiality and accuracy is justified. We pledge to get beyond the soundbite and the theatrics of party election management and reach the real issues that count with our audiences," he said.

BBC Radio 4's *Election Call* phone-in programme will offer up a politician a day to the electorate's questions, while Radio 5 Live, in its first election, will open several lines 24 hours a day, offering listeners a chance to set the questions they want the politicians to answer.

Channel 4 has tracked down 36 of the 1,784 people born on the day Margaret Thatcher was elected Tory leader on February 11, 1975, as part of its election coverage. Now aged 22, the group, known as *Thatcher's Children*, have only ever been aware of Conservative rule and are to vote in the general election for the first time.

They will give their views on politics and the state of the nation in a series of brief interviews, replacing programme trailers on Channel 4 in the run-up to the election. On April 24, 30 of Thatcher's Children will come together for a studio debate on the youth vote.

David Lloyd, chief commissioning editor of news and current affairs at Channel 4, said that the station hoped to eliminate the ennui that had crept into the weeks of pre-campaign posturing by politi-



Kenneth Clarke will be going *On the Record* to debate with his Labour and Liberal Democrat rivals

cians. "We have worked hard to provide a range of programmes that allow one to follow the campaign seriously, but at the same time to be properly inquisitive and sceptical about what the politicians are telling us," he said.

The satirist Rory Bremner will be offering his view in

programmes scheduled for the Saturday before and the Saturday after the election. Sir David Frost will present *1964 And All That*, in which he compares the present contest with the 1964 general election.

Politicians and celebrities will take part in a quiz show, *Spot the Difference*, in which they will be asked to explain the difference between the parties' policies.

Each weekday Channel 4 will broadcast a new *E-thought*: a short, provocative idea, expressed through words and graphics and lasting less than a minute. They are designed to provide the infor-

mation and details that many politicians are unable or unwilling to reveal, such as the fact that the pharmaceuticals bill for the NHS has doubled in the past four years.

The political chat show *Midnight Special* will return for 90 minutes from Mondays to Thursdays.

Wily political bird survives Paxo roasting

THE torrent of election television began as soon as John Major left for the Palace to ask for a dissolution on Monday morning. And little of it amounted to much more than pointless moving pictures.

The most bizarre — and expensive — images were those from the ITN helicopter as it tracked the roof of the Prime Minister's Daimler crawling through the traffic up the Mall. The most vacuous were yesterday's BBC *Breakfast News* interviews with each party leader which revealed nothing new at all.

But some journalism penetrated the bonhomie late on Monday night when Jeremy Paxman caught up with Tony Blair in the bland surroundings of a Gloucester hotel room. There was no breakthrough here, no blood on the fitted carpet, but Paxo at least asked the sort of questions that have been nagging away at the back of many minds, not least Labour supporters. Paxman wanted to know what difference there was now between Labour and the Tories. And was there anything, anything at all, which Tony Blair was willing to promise?

Political parties tend to refight the previous election and Blair is plainly anxious to show that he is not Neil Kinnock. Labour supporters have no need this time to hold their breath as they did whenever Kinnock went on TV, praying their leader would stumble to the end without inflicting too much damage on the party. But whereas Kinnock would at least attempt to hit a question for six now and then, even if he was caught out, Blair bats each ball to the earth with a thud.

Paxman was determined to ask some troublesome questions. For instance, is Tony Blair still a socialist? We'd need to start defining terms, Jeremy. Why are nine out of ten of the lowest scoring schools in the GCSE and primary league tables administered by Labour authorities? Some of these areas are the poorest in the land, Jeremy.

On the NHS, if there are no specific promises, how will we judge whether Labour has succeeded? At the moment there are people sleeping in hospital corridors, Jeremy. Will you promise then that at the end of your first term there

will not be people sleeping in corridors? It is not a promise I feel I can make, Jeremy. Blair was not flustered, but you could tell by his face that he is rarely spoken to like this.

After Paxman had established that Cedric Brown and other fat cats would not be paying more income tax after five years of Labour, the interviewer tried a trick question. Your promise about no increases in income tax, does this apply to the whole of the UK? Blair, looking perplexed, said yes. What could Jeremy be getting at? Then what about Scotland; surely you will be campaigning for a Scottish Assembly with tax-raising powers? Does that not imply more tax? No, said Blair, just because the assembly will be able to raise tax



TV WATCH
NICHOLAS WAPSHOTT

does not mean that it will actually do so. Paxman gave him the sort of look he reserves for waiters in Italian restaurants who say there is no more red wine in the cellar.

Paxman dealt another couple of blows. You are the sort of politician who is brave enough to admit to having changed your mind about things, aren't you? Blair looked pleased. But surely what you need in Downing Street is someone like Mrs Thatcher who doesn't change their mind. Blair blinked in amazement.

And he blinked even more when Paxman wondered whether *The Sun* with its bare-breasted women was the right forum for Blair to use for outlining his views on Europe. I really think there are more important things to concern ourselves with, said Blair. And, to his evident relief, they ran out of time.

Lib Dems rebuked for Union Jack proposal

BY POLLY NEWTON, POLITICAL REPORTER

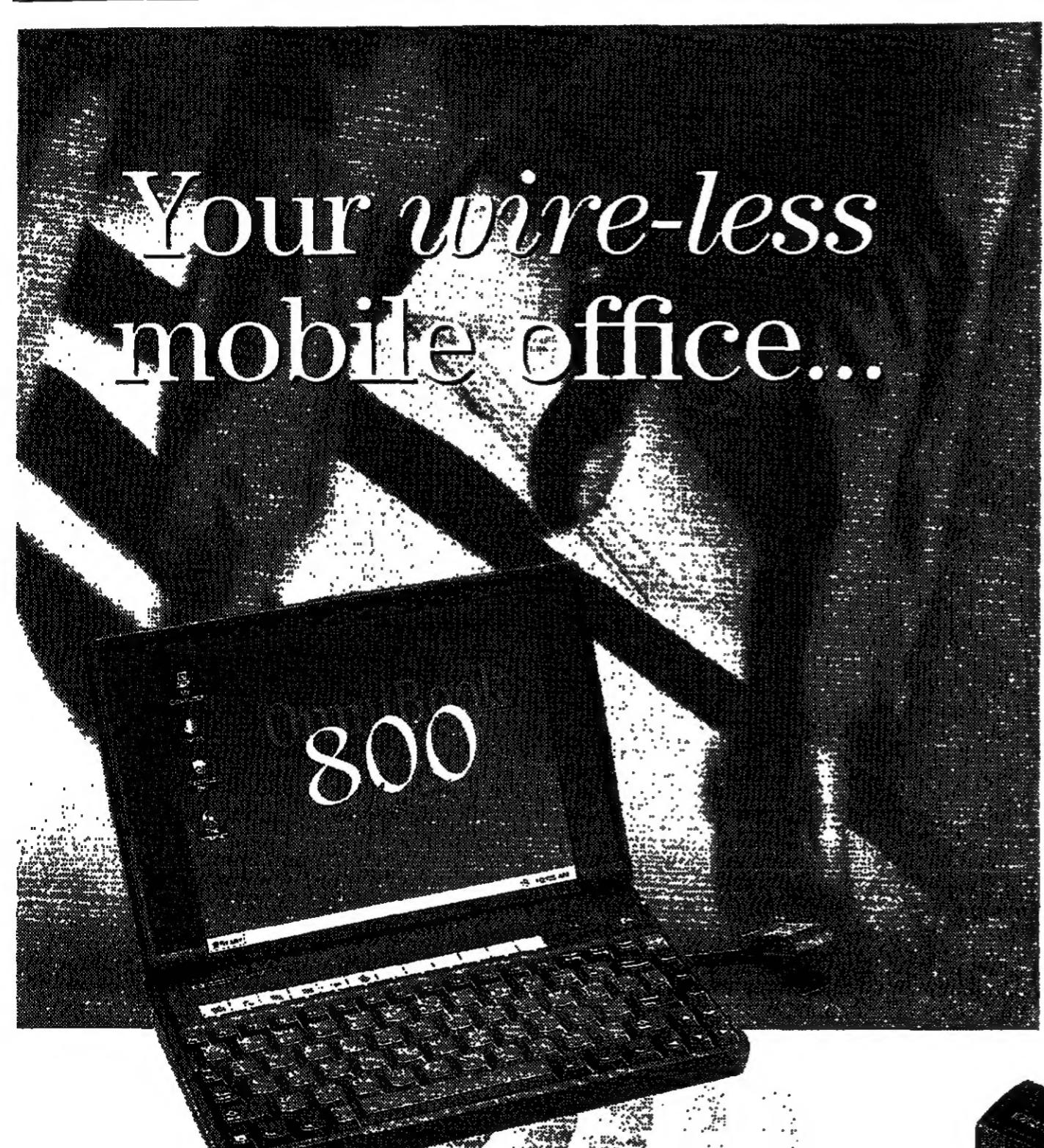
THE Liberal Democrats dismissed a suggestion by two of their MPs yesterday that the Union Jack and the national anthem could be replaced if Scotland and Wales had their own parliaments.

The idea was contained in a pamphlet by Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrat Treasury spokesman, and Ray Michie, MP for Argyll and Bute, who said the "rebirth" of a federal United Kingdom could be reinforced by the adoption of a new flag and a new anthem.

They said: "For many people, the Union Flag has been devolved in modern times by its association with the Tory party — and the

Blair should
way of bas
in The St

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a lack of proposal

Blair should be wary of basking in The Sun

Tony Blair is becoming too fashionable. He is in danger of appearing as all things to all people. His campaign advisers are so keen to attract support and to neutralise opposition that they risk misleading voters. For them, winning the election is everything and the problems of governing can be left until later. But the price may be disenchantment and charges of betrayal.

The smirk on Peter Mandelson's face when he praised the wisdom of *The Sun* in backing Mr Blair said it all. There are obvious campaigning reasons why Mr Mandelson would prefer *The Sun's* support, not because the paper's editorial line will shift many votes, but to avoid the mauling which Labour received on its news pages when Neil Kinnock was leader. And *The Sun's* decision matches the big swing against the Tories among its readers, as shown by the polls.

But Mr Mandelson's strongest personal belief — apart from his dedication to Labour (in its Blairite version) first, foremost and always — is a vision of Britain's role in Europe totally opposed by *The Sun*. Mr Mandelson is, after all, a vice-chairman of the European Movement, while *The Sun* is a standard bearer of sceptic populism. But the seminal event preceding *The Sun's* declaration of support was an article by Mr Blair on Europe.

Mr Blair claimed there was nothing in the article which contradicted his previous line. But the tone was markedly different from what he would have said to either a business or a European audience. His opening paragraph — "We will have no truck with a European superstate. We will fight for Britain's interests and to keep our independence every inch of the way" — could have been written by Norman Tebbit. His pledge that he was a British patriot and would "not sell my country short" was clearly designed to appeal to a sceptic audience. He advisers cannot have been surprised, nor had any reason to complain, when the front-page story in *The Sun* on Monday said

PETER RIDDELL

Losing job is voters' biggest fear

BY IAN MURRAY

UNEMPLOYMENT is by far the biggest fear of voters, according to a MORI poll published yesterday. The survey, which could serve as a handy guide for politicians of the issues which

they need to confront, shows that nearly half the population (48 per cent) is anxious about being out of work, compared with under a third who worry about law and order (32 per cent), education (30 per cent) and health services (29 per cent). The economy and

Europe trail in fifth equal on just 14 per cent.

Concern for the constitution, a source of bitter party division, did not feature as an issue. Drug abuse worries 8 per cent but race relations only 3 per cent in the What's Worrying Britain survey.

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Prescott tours marginal seats urging waverers to exercise their right to vote

Labour introduces its 'Mr Motivator'

BY JAMES LANDALE, POLITICAL REPORTER

JOHN PRESCOTT appeared yesterday in his all-action role for the general election campaign — as Labour's "Mr Motivator". Like GMTV's renowned fitness instructor, the deputy Labour leader had been dispatched on a roadshow tour of Britain; his task, however, was to galvanise the public to vote Labour.

Mr Prescott, on a windswept Cornish beach, was appearing live, via satellite, at the party's London headquarters. As Tony Blair began to speak, presenting the press conference that launched Labour's election campaign, the lights dimmed and a beaming Mr Prescott materialised on a large screen.

"Before we talk about our plans to get people off welfare and into work, can I introduce you to our very own Mr Motivator, John Prescott, who is in Falmouth with some voters who are switching to Labour," the Labour leader said.

"Hello, John," Mr Blair said. "Hello, Tony," Mr Prescott said.

The weather is wonderful, the sun is bright, said Mr Prescott, who fortunately was not wearing Mr Motivator's multicolour lycra training kit. "I wish I could stay here for the whole campaign but I know you won't let me, Tony." Mr Blair nodded in agreement.

Surrounded by Labour supporters, Mr Prescott was presented with a giant Cornish pasty by a local baker, Paul Barron-Hodge. "I will bring it back home," Mr Prescott de-

sired.

"We won't stop until we've



John Prescott and Candy Atherton, Labour candidate in Falmouth, slicing into a pasty baked by Paul Barron-Hodge

clared. "It will keep the whole Shadow Cabinet going for 40 days." Back at headquarters, Mr Blair and his frontbench team, accustomed to the delicate cuisine of north London's more fashionable restaurants, laughed nervously.

Turning to his entourage, Mr Prescott introduced Stan Gore, a local retired civil servant and former Conservative voter who is planning to support Labour on May 1.

Mr Gore, a neighbour of Sebastian Coe, the Olympic Gold winner and sitting MP for the three-way marginal of Falmouth and Camborne, said he was concerned about his young family's future. "It will be best served under a Labour administration," he said.

Mr Prescott said that Mr Gore's story was also that of thousands of other "switchers" across the country.

"So Tony, I am in Plymouth tomorrow. I will give you a ring at the same time. Cheering."

With that, and a wave from everyone in Falmouth, Mr Prescott disappeared from the screen.

The deputy Labour leader has embarked on a 10,000-mile trip around Britain, billed as the biggest ever election tour by one politician.

He will be visiting more than 65 marginal seats during the six-week campaign. In the first 48 hours, he intends to cover eight seats and 750 miles in the South West and South Wales.

"We won't stop until we've

taken Labour's message to every corner of Britain," Mr Prescott said. "My job is to motivate people and get the vote out to make sure we can beat the Tories."

Mr Prescott's tour will end in the northern-most marginal, Inverness, in late April. At the Beacon School in Fal-

mouth yesterday, Mr Prescott was asked by pupils what it was like being an MP.

"It is better than working," he joked, before adding: "It is an important and privileged job. You represent people, and I have always wanted to do that."

Later, on a visit to a day-care

centre in Plymouth, Mr Prescott joined children in singing a nursery rhyme with words slightly adapted for the occasion.

"Ring a ring of red roses," sang Mr Prescott as he moved in a circle with three little girls, a boy and a day care assistant. "Atishoo, atishoo,

John Major all fall down." As he sank to the grass, he sighed: "You can tell it is the election. We play this in the Commons all the time."

Simon Jenkins, page 18
Letters, page 19
Brian MacArthur, page 23
Housing policies, page 41

Labour to cut cost of culture

LABOUR yesterday unveiled

a number of incentives, including cheaper theatre seats and free admission to national museums, to improve access to cultural heritage (Jill Sherman writes). Jack Cunningham, the Shadow National Heritage Secretary, also announced plans to help youngsters with outstanding talent, and an Arts Card for teenagers offering discounts on admission fees.

Labour also proposed "open theatre nights" where everyone will be entitled to cheap tickets on Mondays, paying as much as they can afford.

Labour trail in fifth equal on just 14 per cent.

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Concern for the constitution, a source of bitter party division, did not feature as an issue. Drug abuse worries 8 per cent but race relations only 3 per cent in the What's Worrying Britain survey.

Call for watchdog to replace part-time governors

BBC's amateur bosses out of date, say MPs

By ALEXANDRA FREAN
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

MPs demanded the abolition of the BBC's Board of Governors yesterday, labelling them as part-time, well-intentioned amateurs drawn from the great and the good, and incapable to one.

The Heritage Select Committee called unanimously for the governors' regulatory duties to be transferred to an independent watchdog, with the power to fine the BBC if its programmes fail to meet standards of taste, decency, quality, diversity and social responsibility.

The governors' custodial function of representing the interests of licence-payers would be transferred to a board of directors, headed by an executive chairman and including qualified non-executive directors from different backgrounds.

The Heritage Committee, chaired by the Labour MP Gerald Kaufman, said that the BBC could not expect to "sur-



Kaufman: Auntie needs power dressing, he said

tough, commercial environment if no longer is. It is idle to suppose that the present board, however talented they may be as individuals — or any other group of individuals appointed in the same way and from the same pool of the great and the good — can hope to compete adequately."

The 12 board members are appointed by the Queen in Council on the advice of the Government, to protect the public interest. Their terms of office usually last five years. They include Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, former head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, the Rev Norman Drummond, former headmaster of the leading Edinburgh public school Loreto, Bill Jordan, general secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and Lord Gordon Lennox, a former Ambassador to Spain.

Mr Kaufman said: "It's about time that Auntie started power-dressing." The committee also recommended that the BBC should be allowed to

borrow money like any commercial organisation, to help it to survive media revolution.

The BBC has recently strengthened the regulatory powers of the governors, enabling them to act as a final court of appeal for viewers bringing complaints.

A BBC spokesman said that their role had been "consolidated and closely refined", adding that the BBC upheld more complaints about its programmes than the Independent Television Commission did on commercial broadcasts.

He added: "The BBC's prime role is as a public service broadcaster. It is not a plc and the governors' custodial role on behalf of the licence

holders reflects this."

Mr Kaufman said that the BBC should be subjected to the same rigorous regulation as Channel 4, which can be fined by the ITC for transgressions of taste, decency and impartiality.

The committee advised against privatising Channel 4.

vive, prosper and expand" if its fate was in the hands of a group of part-time people nominated for various attributes not connected with broadcasting".

In a report titled *BBC and the Future of Broadcasting* it said: "While a board of governors consisting of nominated amateurs was, in an earlier phase of its existence, an appropriate way for the BBC to be supervised, in the new,



Damon Hill with his wife, Georgie, after receiving his OBE from the Queen at Buckingham Palace yesterday

DAMON HILL returned to Buckingham Palace yesterday to receive the insignia of the OBE almost 30 years after he won the world championship for the second time.

Mr Kaufman said that the Queen was "up to speed" with her knowledge of motor racing. "She appreciated that it was a close finish last year. And she also knows that it is going to be a bit tougher this year." Only nine

Hill's lap of honour

honoured in 1968 after winning the world championship for the second time, said: "The route seems smaller than I remember it. I'm very proud to be honoured by the Queen and by the country." He

days ago his Yamaha Arrows car failed to start in the Australian Grand Prix at Melbourne. "We're going to Brazil next week for the next grand prix and looking forward to doing better," he said. Sir Alec Bedser, 78, the former England cricketer, was knighted yesterday.

Psychosis that can be exposed by stress

MEDICAL BRIEFING

DIEGO COGOLATO is starting a six-year jail sentence after repeatedly stabbing his lover, the fashion designer Ossie Clark, to death. Cogolato also battered Mr Clark around the head with a stone, a terracotta flower vase and a stave. The attack on Mr Clark occurred during a period when Cogolato was said to have been suffering from a transient psychotic episode.

Cogolato, 29, seemed to have led a purposeless life since completing his military service in Italy. He regularly took illicit drugs and excessive amounts of alcohol. The attack on Mr Clark was, according to Cogolato, ordered by God as he, Cogolato, was the Messiah sent to rid the world of Satan — his former lover.

Cogolato was originally described as suffering from schizophrenia. The history of delusions, the hearing of God's voice and the patient's acquiescence in the violent solution that he perceived to be God's will, are depressingly familiar to most doctors. Later this initial diagnosis was modified and he was said to be suffering from an acute psychotic episode, sometimes referred to as a brief reactive psychosis. The features of transient psychotic episodes are that the symptoms should be of sudden origin, last for at least a few hours, and that the patient's personality should return to its pre-episode state within a month. During the Second World War, soldiers who displayed these symptoms were said to suffer from "three-day schizophrenia".

Patients who suffer a brief reactive psychosis often have pre-existing mental disease, or a personality disorder, which is exacerbated by any of the stresses that induce emotional turmoil. Unhappiness after the end of an affair or a divorce is a common precipitating cause of a reactive psychosis but other patients react equally badly to excessive workload or illness.

With treatment the majority of patients will overcome any psychotic symptoms should they recur, and there is increasing evidence that early anti-psychotic treatment can prevent later trouble.

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Growing fear of illegal immigrants and criminals replaces humanitarian response to refugees

Italian alarm as Albanian influx leads to clashes

FROM RICHARD OWEN IN ROME

THE flood of Albanians fleeing across the Adriatic to southern Italy approached 10,000 yesterday, with reports of growing tension and violence between residents and immigrants.

The humanitarian response to the exodus at the weekend has given way to alarm, with officials saying they fear Italy is facing an influx of illegal immigrants and criminals more than a refugee crisis.

The Italian authorities appear to have been caught napping, despite weeks of warnings in the Italian press of a repetition of the influx of 1991, when more than 40,000 fled to Italy after Communism collapsed in Albania.

Officials said it was "practically impossible" to establish the new refugees' identities, carry out full health checks and weed out criminal elements. "I fear the immigrants include Albanian mafiosi who have escaped from jail, and will link up with the Italian Mafia and give them arms," said Pier Luigi Vigna, the chief anti-Mafia prosecutor. "Albania has become the only country in the world with no prisoners." The Italian Cabi-



Iran school attacked

BY JAMES PITTIFER

HEAVILY armed men leading a crowd of adolescents wielding pickaxes and shovels destroyed much of the Iranian Government's agricultural school on the outskirts of Tirana last night.

This impressive modern complex, near the airport, was the showpiece of the Tehran Government's quiet economic and diplomatic offensive in Albania. The cost of the damage is estimated by Albanian employees at about \$1.5 million (£950,000). The school was opened by President Berisha and a leading Iranian cleric three years ago.

Albania, where 60 per cent of the population is Muslim,

was a natural target for Iranian aid and missionary work after years of religious persecution under communism.

Strong American opposition has, however, prevented the opening of high-level diplomatic relations.

In response the Iranians have concentrated on economic links, with frequent trade exhibitions in Albania, subsidised exports of Iranian goods, and this large and well-run programme concentrating on educating farmers, particularly in the rearing of cattle.

The Tehran approach in Albania has avoided the ostentatious mosque-building programmes of Kuwait and Abu Dhabi.



Albanians, desperate to flee anarchy and poverty afflicting their country, attempt to sail an abandoned cargo vessel to Italy yesterday by fashioning sails from rubbish sacks. The refugees, lacking any other means to flee, had hauled the rusting coaster, which has no power, along the dock

Perilous voyage to 'a better life'

in Durres harbour and then pushed off into the current, using lumber and metal sheeting as oars to propel it. The enterprise seemed so risky that about half of the people on

board disembarked at the mouth of the harbour, fearing it might sink. The rest, numbering about a hundred, drifted out into the Adriatic to what they hope will be a better life

Red Cross backs Tirana appeal for aid



Anthony Loyd reports from Tirana on the desperate state of the civilian population as food stocks fall to critical levels

ALBANIA's new Prime Minister, Bashkim Fino, issued an urgent appeal for humanitarian aid yesterday after food stocks fell to critical levels.

The International Committee of the Red Cross backed his appeal and called for funds to finance emergency aid.

The head of the European Union delegation in the capital, Tirana, refused to rule out recommending that foreign troops should be sent to safeguard the delivery of emergency supplies. "We are not looking at military intervention or a big force," Jan de Marchant et D'Ansembourg, a Dutch diplomat, said yesterday. "But we need aid to be brought in for those who need

it, and we cannot provide humanitarian assistance without first stabilising the environment to do that might require a real European commitment here."

Mr D'Ansembourg spoke after separate meetings with President Berisha, Mr Fino and Albanian officials. His fact-finding delegation arrived in Tirana on Monday night and leaves today to submit a

report to EU foreign ministers.

The delegation is divided into three groups, assessing security aspects of any potential aid mission as well as financial and humanitarian requirements.

"We have four military men concentrating on that aspect of affairs," Mr D'Ansembourg said. His delegation was sent after an EU meeting in The

Netherlands last weekend refused Albania's request for a peacekeeping force to help to restore order. However, that refusal did not preclude the deployment of a UN-style "protection" force for the delivery of aid.

Mr Fino repeated his request for outside assistance to restore order. "We need humanitarian aid as soon as possible, mainly food and medicine to prevent further aggravation of the situation,"

state television quoted him as saying on Monday.

"European police units are necessary to distribute this aid ... and contribute to restoring order and rebuilding our police. Reorganising public

position
challenge
Kremlin

Brita

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FROM BRONWEN MADDOX
IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT CLINTON intended to spend yesterday with his physiotherapists, dubbed "the torture team", as well as preparing for today's trip to Helsinki to meet President Yeltsin of Russia.

Instead, from his wheelchair in the White House, he grappled with a different, unexpected, ordeal: the urgent search for a new head of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Anthony Lake's decision to withdraw his nomination, making him the first casualty of this round of Senate confirmation hearings, shows how the campaign finance

row has brought government to a standstill. The Administration is weeks behind schedule in making key appointments as officials scour their offices for memorandums demanded by congressional committees. The Republican-controlled Congress, obsessed with the document trail, has passed no significant legislation in three months.

Little wonder that to Mr Clinton foreign policy seems an enticing refuge, although the Helsinki summit reflects one of the causes of the Washington deadlock: the United States lacks a real threat,

abroad or at home. Suggestions that China tried to influence November's elections have partly satisfied the craving for a new enemy. But members of Congress have found it easiest to fill the policy vacuum with attacks on each other, bringing an emphatic end to the bipartisan honeymoon and jeopardising Mr Clinton's hopes of a worthwhile second term.

As Mr Lake put it on Monday night: "Washington has gone haywire." A career diplomat with a thin-lipped smile, 1950s fedora, horn-rimmed glasses and beige mackintosh, Mr Lake's bitterness at the abrupt end to his ascent is understandable.

Mr Lake's record at the National Security Council was not faultless, but he is right to claim that seeking high office has become perilous. The Senate investigates every corner of a nominee's life, a scrutiny many find unacceptable even if there is no illegally hired nanny in the background to disqualify him.

Mr Lake's move also shows how the fundraising row is clogging the machinery of government. His confirmation hearings were prolonged largely because the committee used the questions to investigate White House campaign tactics rather than his suitability for the job.

Meanwhile, the State Department has delayed nominating am-

bassadors and assistant secretaries while it checks whether any have connections, particularly with Asia, that could seem suspicious.

The White House has postponed a study of gambling, for fear of charges that Mr Clinton was influenced by gambling donations. Above all, policy towards China has been complicated: the charges, denied by Peking, will dominate Vice-President Al Gore's forthcoming trip to China.

The investigations may turn up extensive evidence of illegality, but so far the clamour has far outpaced the findings. The dispute is a reminder of how two obstacles increasingly threaten to cripple

American political life: the difficulty of winning office, and of getting anything done once in the job. Those constraints would be less if there were more sense of urgency among congressional Republicans or Democrats about pushing through a legislative agenda. The US is not short of problems to solve. But the economic prosperity that swept Mr Clinton to a second term, as well as the end of the Cold War, have removed the pressure which would have forced Congress and the White House to reach across their divisions. Many besides Mr Lake will feel bitter if the lesson of the 105th Congress is that America can be governed only in crisis.

BEN MARGOT / AP

Clinton candidate for CIA chief quits over Senate 'circus'

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S controversial fundraising antics claimed a member of his inner circle yesterday when Anthony Lake withdrew his nomination as Director of the CIA, maintaining he was the victim of partisan politics.

Mr Lake, the President's former National Security Adviser and senior negotiator on Ireland, told Mr Clinton he was no longer prepared to act as a "dancing bear in a political circus" of Senate confirmation hearings.

His departure, which comes three months after being nominated, left the President hobbled both physically and politically on the eve of his flight to the Helsinki summit with President Yeltsin. Mr Clinton had hoped to spend the day resting after an operation to his knee last week, but instead was forced to consider swift replacements for the CIA position.

Mr Lake was the fourth nominee for the CIA job during Mr Clinton's tenure at the White House and the second to have withdrawn from the race, which also includes board chairman of the nation's 12 other intelligence services and controller of the purse strings for a \$30 billion (£19 billion) budget.

The resignation came after a damaging report which alleged that the Democrats had ignored the President's national security aides and even deployed secret information from the CIA to ensure White House access last year for a Lebanese businessman wanted by Interpol.

Nancy Soderberg, then Mr Lake's deputy at the National Security Council, had warned the Democratic National Committee that Roger Tamraz was not to be allowed into the



I still believe in public service. But Washington has gone haywire.

contributed at least \$177,000 to the Democrats in 1995 and 1996. In Lebanon, he is wanted for questioning regarding \$200 million allegedly missing from the Bank al-Mashrieq.

The CIA and congressional investigators are treating the claims as "extremely serious". Senate Republicans had planned to make them an issue at hearings into Mr Lake's confirmation.

It was the second time, including an FBI warning to

the national security team about China's attempts to influence the election, that Mr Lake was said by the White House to have had no knowledge of intelligence matters in his own department.

But he had also drawn criticism for not informing Capitol Hill of a tacit White House decision in 1994 to approve Iran's arming of the Bosnian Muslims. He had also faced lengthy questioning over personal finances and a political past which included a protest resignation from the Nixon Administration over the invasion of Cambodia.

The latest bombshell over Mr Tamraz had given the Senate intelligence committee enough leverage to delay a vote on Mr Lake's nomination until mid-April, bringing further damage to an intelligence agency racked by mole.

In a letter to Mr Clinton, Mr Lake said he was the victim of a "brutal" confirmation process. He had lost his patience, he said, come close to losing his dignity, and was not prepared to face a nomination process with me end.

"I have believed all my life in public service. I still do. But Washington has gone haywire," he said. "I hope that people of all political views beyond our city will demand that Washington give priority to policy over partisanship, to governing over gotcha."

Those being considered for the vacant post last night included George Tenet, the acting CIA Director, Jamie Gorelick, the Deputy Attorney-General, Frank Wisner, the US Ambassador to India, and Sam Nunn, the former senator who is a military and intelligence specialist.

Leading article, page 19



Linda Finch prepares to take off from Oakland on the first leg of her round-the-world flight. The total journey will cover 26,000 nautical miles.

Texan millionairess takes off in flight path of pioneering pilot

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

A TEXAN millionairess has set off from California in a vintage aircraft in an attempt to recreate and complete Amelia Earhart's ill-fated attempt to fly round the world 60 years ago.

Hundreds of schoolchildren cheered as Linda Finch took off in her painstakingly restored 1935 Lockheed Electra 10E on Monday from the same airfield in Oakland from which Earhart left on St Patrick's Day in 1937. Ms Finch, 46, hopes to complete the round-the-world flight planned by Miss Earhart, who earned international fame when she became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic in 1932.

Earhart originally hoped to set a

in boxes and spent two years travelling west, but she crashed in Hawaii. She had her plane repaired for a second attempt heading east, but disappeared on July 2, 1937, while flying a leg from Lae, New Guinea, to Howland Island in the Pacific Ocean.

Unlike Earhart, Ms Finch will benefit from a global-positioning satellite receiver and will use VHF radio to help with landings and take-offs. She will also have an escort plane carrying a film crew to chronicle her endeavour.

Flying at a maximum speed of 200mph, her flight will cover 26,000 nautical miles and take her to 20 countries before she returns to Oakland in July. She plans to drop a wreath on Howland Island, near where Earhart is presumed to have gone down, to commemorate the great aviator.

Earhart: disappeared over Pacific in 1937

Leading article, page 19

Missing Renoir retrieved from US

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

THE Spencer-Churchill family has retrieved Renoir's *Study for the Apple Gatherers* from a leading American collector after accusing a London dealer of selling it to him without permission.

A lawyer representing Jeanne Spencer-Churchill, whose millionaire husband is a cousin of the Duke of Marlborough, picked up the painting at the weekend from the Connecticut home of Richard Thurne, a noted collector of 18th and 19th-century French paintings.

The undated oil of two women picking apples in a field, valued at up to \$2 million (£1.26 million), is now being shipped back to London by Sotheby's. Mrs Spencer-Churchill, 42, herself an accomplished artist, inherited the painting from her grandfa-

ther, Paul Maze, who was Sir Winston Churchill's painting tutor.

Mr Maze's father was a close friend of Renoir as well as other famous French artists including Monet, Manet and Brugge. He had bought the oil in the 1930s from the artist's son, Jean Renoir.

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According to a High Court writ, Mr Joll told the family that he had arranged for the painting to be taken to the Lefevre Gallery in Mayfair to be viewed by museum officials. The museum decided not to take up the offer and Mr Joll is said to have moved it to another, unnamed London gallery.

Mrs Spencer-Churchill only

learnt that the painting was

missing when she called the

Museum of Wales to check on

it while moving house in

January. In court papers, she

says she believes that Mr Joll

sold the painting to Mr Thurne

for the bargain price of

\$250,000 without informing her.

Mr Thurne agreed to return the painting to the family because of the threat of further legal action in the American courts. But he was said yesterday to be distressed by the case and seeking reimbursement of the purchase price from Mr Joll.

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Zaireans welcome rebel liberators in captured city

THEY are wearing white strips of cloth around their heads in this jungle city which last weekend became the greatest prize to fall to rebels advancing across Zaire. The people say they will not remove the bandanas until the arrival of the rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, who is expected in coming days.

"The headbands symbolise victory and liberation," Paul-Marcel Volakonga, a librarian at the local university, said. "The fighters who freed us from dictatorship are not rebels, they are liberators."

Apart from a few looted shops in the town centre, there is little evidence of the fall of Kisangani to Mr Kabila's Democratic Alliance of Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire. The Zairean Army and its mercenary backers had been expected to resist the rebel assault but instead they fled in panic.

The bulk of the army crossed the Zaire River in boats, residents said. Hundreds of French, Serb, Moroccan and other mercenaries who had been drafted in to protect the city, either escaped by aircraft westwards or disappeared into the jungle with the Zairean soldiers.

At the military airport an aircraft, its tyres shot out, bears testimony to a gun battle between the retreating mercenaries and soldiers desperate to prevent their allies flight by air.

"Now all is calm," Mr Volakonga said. "The curfew is over and we can move about the city again. The liberators behave well, they don't beat us as if we were snakes which is what the army did. The mercenaries were cruel, they would just shoot people in cold blood. Their motto was 'No pity'."

Residents said they were waiting for the establishment of a new administration in

Kisangani residents are urging the fighters who freed them from dictatorship to push on for the capital, Kinshasa, reports David Orr

Kisangani, Zaire's third largest city and the farthest point west of the rebels' advance. A decaying city in the depths of the equatorial rainforest, Kisangani has, in this virtually roadless country, a symbolic significance: perched on the banks of the mighty Zaire River, it stands as the gateway to more than 1,000 miles of navigable waterway leading to Kinshasa, the capital.

Kisangani was the redoubt chosen by the Government to launch its counter-offensive

been hospitalised in France came within days of the fall of Kisangani. Speculation is growing that the President will die in exile and that his corrupt regime will self-destruct in the coming days or weeks.

"It would be good if Mobutu dies," Evariste Lombe, a Kisangani medical student, said. "But it would be even better if he lives to witness his own downfall."

The rebels now control a fifth of this sprawling Central African nation. Residents of Kisangani hope that the rebel force will press its military advantage and take all of the country rather than enter into peace talks that are being initiated by the international community.

The rebels are strict but they seem fair," Jerry Seleni, an American missionary whose house was looted by the ill-disciplined army before they fled, said. "There's law and order, it's much easier working with the new guys than with the old regime."

Yesterday, Joseph Kabila, son of the rebel movement's leader and regional commander, gave the residents in Kisangani 48 hours to return all goods looted from abandoned aid agency stores and depots. More than 400 tonnes of material — food, medicine and electrical equipment — was looted by civilians and the retreating army. If they do not comply, they have been told, they will be severely punished. A large amount of the stolen goods have already been returned.

and beat back the rebels.

Zairean Army commanders boasted it could not be taken.

Its fall, diplomats in the region said, will send shockwaves all the way to Kinshasa, where the population grows daily more fearful of turmoil. There have been rumours in the capital of an imminent coup by the military, which has been humiliated in the five months since the rebel insurgency began.

The collapse of the country is matched by the decline in the health of President Mobutu. News that the cancer-stricken leader has again

Defector flies to Philippines

BY JAMES PRINGLE

THE most senior official to defect from North Korea, Hwang Jang Yop, arrived yesterday in the Philippines from Beijing, where he had sought asylum five weeks ago, fearing he was about to be purged by political enemies.

He left the South Korean consulate, where he had been sheltering, in a ruse involving three vans making off in different directions to thwart any assassination attempt. Earlier in the saga, North Korean agents had surrounded the consulate and were assumed still to have at least some operatives in the area.

The night-time escape thwarted television teams which had maintained a vigil outside the consulate in one of Beijing's diplomatic compounds since shortly after Mr Hwang, an ideologue who invented North Korea's philosophy of *Juche*, or self-reliance, walked out of the North Korean Embassy in the Chinese capital on February 12 and took a taxi to the South Korean consulate.

The Chinese were furious when the South Koreans broke the news in a high-profile manner and Beijing tried to give as little prominence to the incident as possible so as not to embarrass North Korea, an old ally and comrade-in-arms during the Korean War.

Officials in the Philippines said that Mr Hwang flew to Clark airbase north of Manila, and the South Korean Foreign Ministry said he was "safe" under South Korean control, in a foreign country. China said that the affair had been resolved through negotiations. Envoy believe he will fly on to Seoul after a decent interval, agreed at Beijing's behest so as to allow Pyongyang to save some face.

As hundreds of troops in full battle gear guarded the earth-moving equipment and police scurried with Israeli Arabs at the site, declared a "closed military zone". Israeli radio said that joint Israeli-Palestinian security patrols had been halted. As the peace process teetered close to collapse amid fears of widespread violence, the radio said Israel had also declared the self-rule towns of Bethlehem and Hebron out of bounds to Israelis.

Outside Bethlehem the first black smoke of burning tyres, so familiar during the 1987-93 uprising, could be seen. Palestinian teenagers taunted soldiers.

Hundreds of Israeli police went to east Jerusalem in anticipation of rioting and all police and army leave was cancelled. Assaf Hefetz, the

national police chief, said that police were preparing "for the ground to get hot", with officials concerned that Friday's Muslim prayers could spark an explosion.

Faisal Hussein, Mr Arafat's chief Jerusalem representative, was one of those Palestinians whose rain-sodden tent protest at the contested pine-covered hillside was wrongfooted as work began a safe distance away. He said at the camp site opposite Har Homa — which the Arabs call Jabal Abu Ghneim — that the groundbreaking, ordered by Mr Netanyahu after a 45-minute session with his military chief, left the Palestinians only one option — "to go down to the streets". The Hamas call for a "continuous intifada" was issued from Jordan by Ibrahim Ghoshe, its spokesman.

London: Malcolm Rifkind yesterday sharply condemned the construction, saying it would do nothing but harm to the peace process. (Michael Rubin writes). In a personal statement, the Foreign Secretary said the settlement went against the spirit of the Oslo agreement.

Most of the mercenaries have been provided by Executive Outcomes, a firm based in Pretoria, South Africa, sub-contracted by Sandline. Sir Julius said yesterday that he was in "absolute control" of the situation and accused Brigadier-General Singirok of "gross insubordination bordering on treason". He could face arrest, he said.

London: There are 15 million refugees in the world and another 20 million displaced persons forced from their homes but within their national borders. Amnesty International said as it launched a global campaign, condemning the "callous disregard" of governments. (AFP)

JUST ZAPP!
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Orthodox Jews on the windswept Har Homa hillside as surveyors move in

Israeli guns guard start of work on settlement

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER
IN JERUSALEM

HAMAS, the Islamic Resistance Movement, last night called for a new Palestinian intifada after Israel defied world opinion and dispatched bulldozers in a military-style operation to start work on Har Homa, a big settlement in annexed east Jerusalem.

Israeli forces were put on an emergency footing after the Government of Binyamin Netanyahu was told by security chiefs that Yassir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, had given the go-ahead for violent protests among the 2.2 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "We have received very hard intelligence that the Palestinian Authority has prepared the ground for violence," the Prime Minister said. "I demand they reverse these decisions immediately. The Palestinian side must choose, do we want terror or do we want peace?"

As hundreds of troops in full battle gear guarded the earth-moving equipment and police scurried with Israeli Arabs at the site, declared a "closed military zone". Israeli radio

said that joint Israeli-Palestinian security patrols had been halted. As the peace process teetered close to collapse amid fears of widespread violence, the radio said Israel had also declared the self-rule towns of Bethlehem and Hebron out of bounds to Israelis.

Outside Bethlehem the first black smoke of burning tyres, so familiar during the 1987-93 uprising, could be seen. Palestinian teenagers taunted soldiers.

Hundreds of Israeli police went to east Jerusalem in anticipation of rioting and all police and army leave was cancelled. Assaf Hefetz, the

national police chief, said that police were preparing "for the ground to get hot", with officials concerned that Friday's Muslim prayers could spark an explosion.

Faisal Hussein, Mr Arafat's chief Jerusalem representative, was one of those Palestinians whose rain-sodden tent protest at the contested pine-covered hillside was wrongfooted as work began a safe distance away. He said at the camp site opposite Har Homa — which the Arabs call Jabal Abu Ghneim — that the groundbreaking, ordered by Mr Netanyahu after a 45-minute session with his military chief, left the Palestinians only one option — "to go down to the streets". The Hamas call for a "continuous intifada" was issued from Jordan by Ibrahim Ghoshe, its spokesman.

London: Malcolm Rifkind yesterday sharply condemned the construction, saying it would do nothing but harm to the peace process. (Michael Rubin writes). In a personal statement, the Foreign Secretary said the settlement went against the spirit of the Oslo agreement.

British 'advisers' detained in Papua

BY NOEL PASCOE
IN PORT MORESBY
AND MICHAEL EVANS,
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

BRITISH former special forces soldiers were among 40 mercenaries still being held in Papua New Guinea yesterday, despite an order by Sir Julius Chan, the Prime Minister, to release them.

The former British and South African soldiers were caught up in a stand-off between Sir Julius, who hired the foreign military "advisers" to train the country's army to put down a nine-year-old secessionist guerrilla war, and Brigadier-General Jerry Singirok, the Defence Force commander, who has been sacked for trying to expel the mercenaries.

The Foreign Office said it had reported that two or three Britons were among those detained. However, the Foreign Office has criticised the Papua New Guinea Government for using mercenaries to train its military. A Foreign Office source said the secessionist dispute with the Bougainville Revolutionary Army rebels could not be resolved through military action.

The mercenaries are being held at a remote camp near the northern coastal town of Wewak. The foreign "advisers" had been hired after an agreement signed on January 31 between Papua New Guinea and Sandline International, a London-based security consultancy company. Sandline, whose chief executive is Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Spicer, formerly of the Scots Guards, said yesterday that General Singirok had been involved in the deal.

The general's address to the nation, which condemned the use of foreign military advisers and called for the resignation of Sir Julius, contradicted his earlier position. Sandline said, in a statement, the company said: "We are astounded that he would unilaterally seek to destabilise the democratically elected Government with his wildly inaccurate, misleading and untrue claims."

Sandline said General Singirok had consistently supported the contractual terms of the deal. The firm added that it had contacted Sir Julius and had confirmed that its advisory team would remain in the country "as long as we are required".

Most of the mercenaries have been provided by Executive Outcomes, a firm based in Pretoria, South Africa, sub-contracted by Sandline. Sir Julius said yesterday that he was in "absolute control" of the situation and accused Brigadier General Singirok of "gross insubordination bordering on treason". He could face arrest, he said.

London: There are 15 million refugees in the world and another 20 million displaced persons forced from their homes but within their national borders. Amnesty International said as it launched a global campaign, condemning the "callous disregard" of governments. (AFP)

WORLD SUMMARY

German troops in race row

Bonn: Ten German soldiers, armed for Bosnia service, were arrested yesterday after attacking an Italian and two Turks with baseball bats and knives. (Roger Boyes writes). They were drunk, but serious enough to pull on masks and shout racist slogans.

The assault embarrassed an army command basking in media praise. Having helped to move 103 people out of Albania, its soldiers had been dubbed "German heroes" for the first time in years.

Separatist's news break

Venice: Police started an investigation into how state television's main news broadcast was interrupted by a man urging people in northeast Italy to overthrow the Government. The separatist managed to block out the sound on RAI Uno's evening news bulletin in the Veneto region twice in about 20 minutes and broadcast his own recorded message. (Reuters)

Poverty wage for UN maid

Geneva: The most senior UN human rights official paid his Peruvian maid a poverty level wage for two-and-a-half years. (Peter Capella writes). José Ayala Lasso, who has resigned as High Commissioner for Human Rights to become Ecuador's Foreign Minister, paid the maid \$800 (£506) a month for working 11½ hours a day on a six-day week.

Cuban drugs general freed

Miami: Cuba has released from prison a former general jailed for 30 years in 1989 for his part in a drug trafficking scandal that shocked Cuba's Communist Party (David Adams writes). Relatives said Brigadier General Patricio de la Guardia, 58, was told he was free soon after hearing of the death of his father, 97.

Amnesty drive on refugees

London: There are 15 million refugees in the world and another 20 million displaced persons forced from their homes but within their national borders. Amnesty International said as it launched a global campaign, condemning the "callous disregard" of governments. (AFP)

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When size is everything

JANE SHILLING GETS DRESSED

I am not in general much given to conspiracy theories, but I have lately begun to wonder about men and their clothes. I mean, if you say to a girl "What size are you", she will instantly reply "ten", or "twelve" or whatever. If the conversation has taken a really technical turn, someone might admit to having a size twelve top half and a size fourteen bottom, or to being a size eight at Jaeger and a size twelve at Miss Selfridge, where the margins are tighter and the clientele skinnier, but that is as complicated as it gets.

All this makes shopping a matter of beautiful simplicity. You wander into a shop, pick up This Season's Pretties Ruffle-front Frock in cerise georgette overprinted with lime triffids, take it into the fitting-room and — hey presto! — it fits. Or possibly not. In which case you try again with the next size up until it does. Really, a child could do it.

In fact with children it is even easier, since all you have to do is remember how old Tarpin is, then purchase the trousers on the hanger that says Age Five. And if they turn out to be six inches too large in every direction, you just roll up the legs until his feet appear and, ignoring his protests, reef in the extra yardage around the waist with one of those useful elastic belts.

Chaps, on the other hand, before they can complete the purchase of a suit, need to have mastered a kind of Venn diagram containing such outlandish measurements as Inside Leg, and Shoulder to Waist Ratio, and Circumference of Thigh. And of course the whole business of measuring all these body parts is so stressful (not to mention, as the years advance, humiliating) that they naturally can't face doing it very often.

So what happens (and this is where the conspiracy theory comes in) is that, gazing fondly at one's Significant Other, one suddenly notices that the shirt he is wearing

(which you never really cared for even when it was new, back in 1986) is so badly frayed that the collar appears to have a half-inch fringe. Furthermore, his corduroys have on each thigh a huge bald patch, which makes them look as though they are suffering from mange.

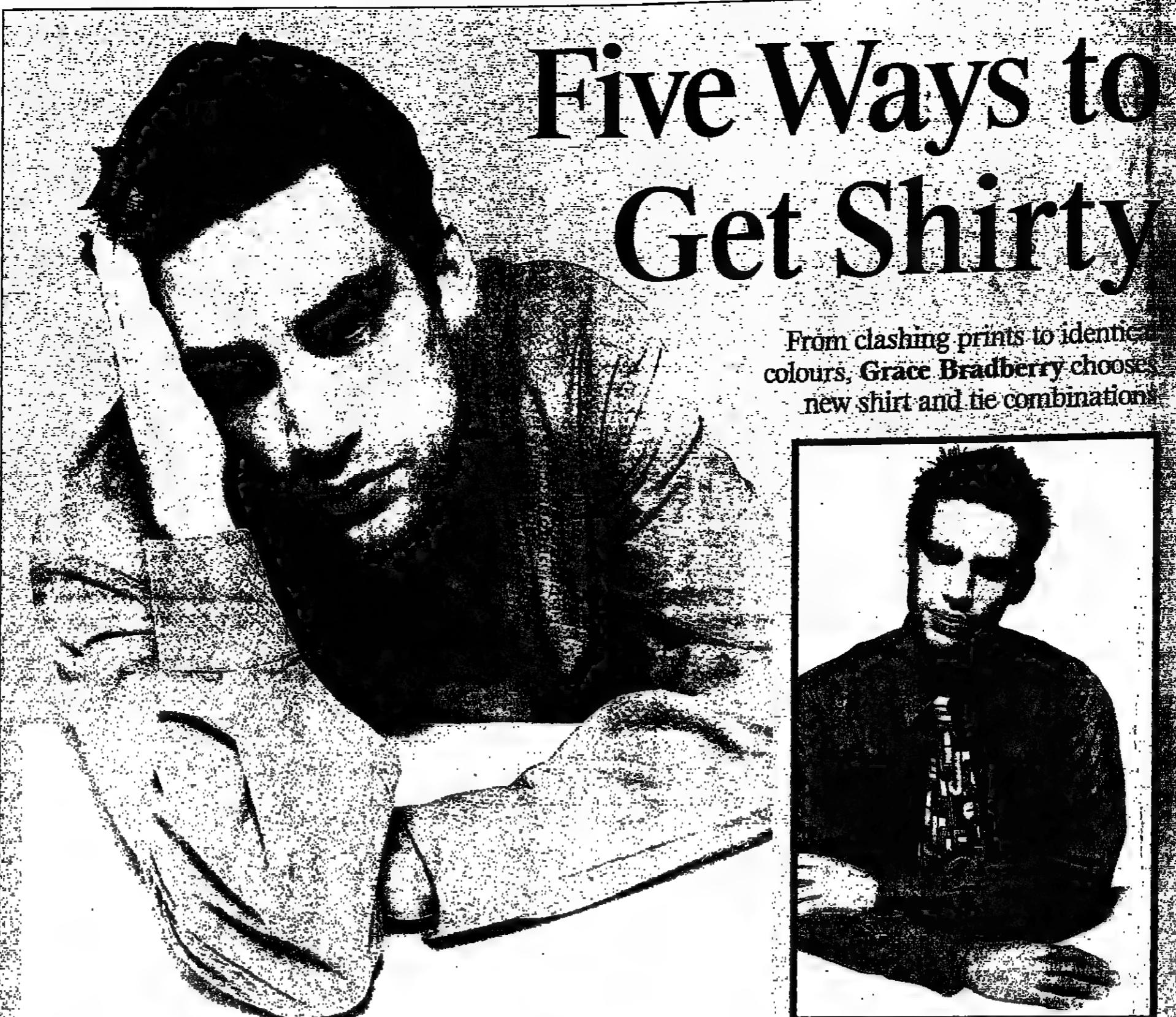
"I can't stand it any more," you say. "You have GOT to get some new clothes." Oh darling, he says shiftily, hellish busy all week. I know, why don't you pop out and buy yourself that jumper you've been on about, and pick me up a couple of pairs of strides while you're at it?

Thus it is that you find yourself in the Posh Gents Outfitters, immobilised like a rabbit before a serpent by Darren the Slick Operator, who has every intention of selling you hundreds of quids' worth of clothes, but not before he has given you a really hard time.

"What size is he, then?" says Darren. "Big bloke, is he? My sort of build? Or is he more the streamlined type? Like Gary over there 'Ere, Gazza, look sharp. Come and give the little lady some assistance."

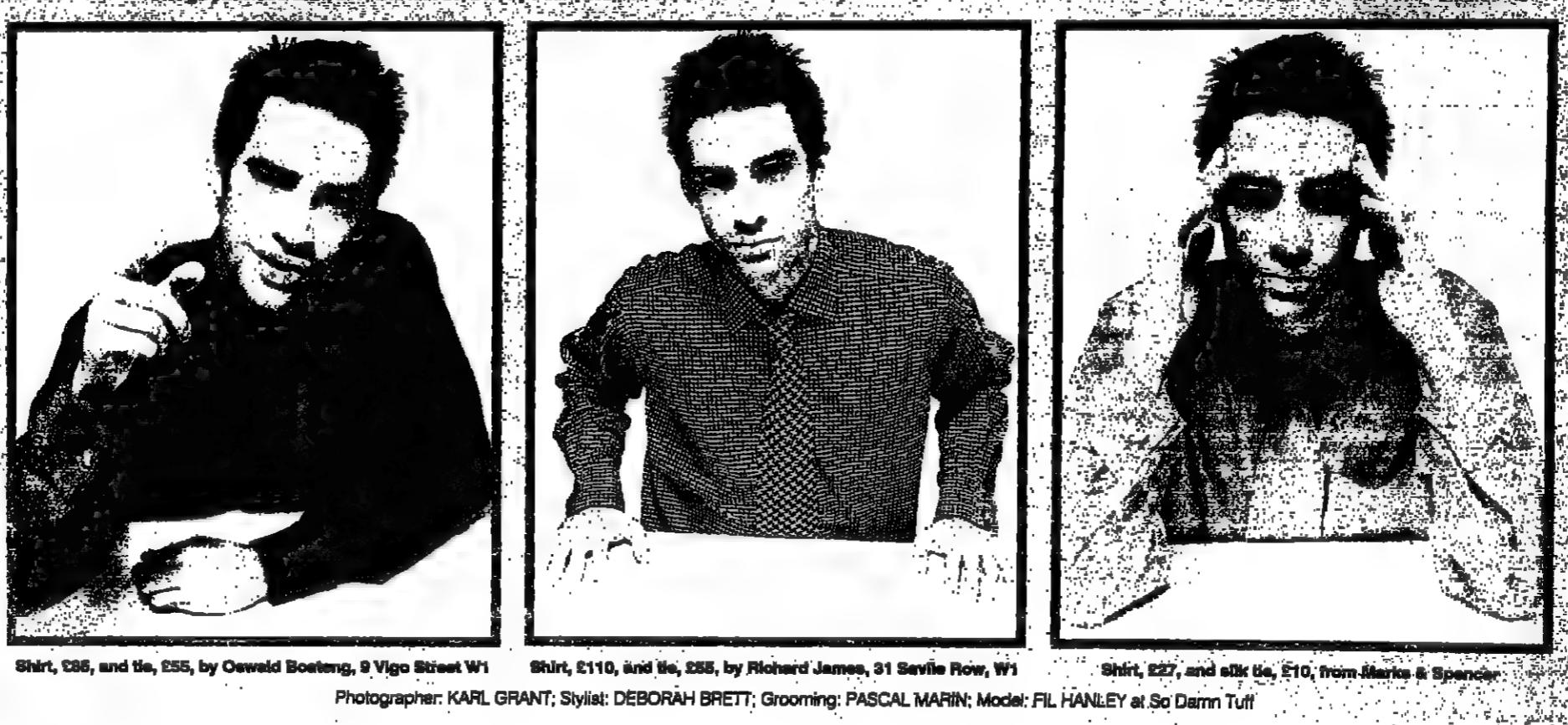
Oh crikey, you say, I suppose he's sort of medium, really. Have you got a shirt in medium, do you think? "Medium," says Darren. "Harrharharharhar. That's a good one, that is. Now, you just tell me his neck measurement and we'll see what we can do. Long in the arm, is he? Or normal?"

Oh, really, it is more than flesh and blood can bear. Observing that you thought you were buying a shirt for a man, not an orang-utan, you sweep out, arriving home extremely flustered to a great deal of eye-rolling from your husband, who says that since you have obviously totally alienated the staff of the only place where he could contemplate purchasing an outfit, most unfortunately the whole business will have to wait until next year at least...



Five Ways to Get Shirty

From clashing prints to identical colours, Grace Bradberry chooses new shirt and tie combinations



Tied-up for the election

Politicians from all parties are choosing the same neckwear



John Major and Tony Blair favour geometric patterns

down his public school background.

Mary Spillane, the image consultant behind Colour Me Beautiful, says that a geometric *foulard*, the name for a repeated pattern, is really the only option: "If you look at what's around, then geometric designs, flowers and stripes are the most prevalent. A politician might as well shoot himself in the foot as wear flowers."

"At the last election, Labour went for great big personality ties — and it was difficult to concentrate on what they were saying."

Closer inspection reveals tiny differences between the two leaders: Mr Blair's squares wobble slightly at the edges. Mr Major's don't.

But who knows, as the election approaches, the politicians may reveal their true colours. Mr Blair might come out in Prada tone-on-tone — red-on-red perhaps, or even blue-on-blue.

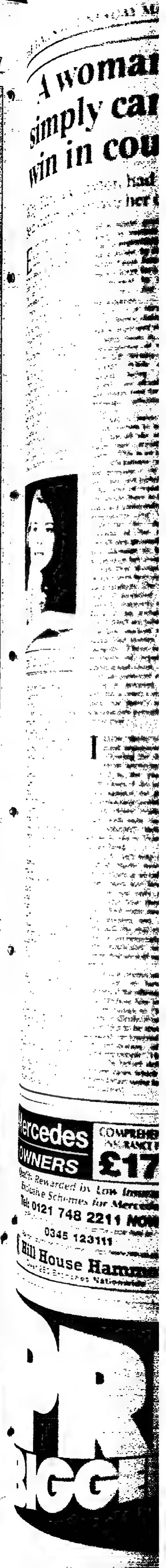
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A woman simply can't win in court

Why Tania Clayton had to
be a victim to prove her case

Every time a woman wins a sexual harassment case, the air grows thick with gibes of wimp and whinger — and that's just from the female commentators.

I think it would be difficult for anyone, however, even the most hardboiled of vinegar-lipped observers, to put up a convincing argument against Tania Clayton, the fire officer who has just won (in an out-of-court settlement) £200,000 to compensate her for five years of bullying and victimisation at work. Her colleagues were undoubtedly wrong to behave as they did; she was undoubtedly right to try to do something about it.

And yet... and yet... five years? One is not supposed to ask of battered wives why



Nigella Lawson

they stay to be battered — as if the question itself blames them for the battering. But why so? Anyway, it is not my intention to hold Mrs Clayton accountable for the behavior of her bully-boy colleagues, but I still cannot imagine what made her put up with it for so long.

I understand that the need to earn a living makes keeping the job you have the dominant imperative. Even more, I assume that, as with women who are attacked at home, those who are bullied at work receive such a blow to their self-esteem that they don't have the confidence to make a stand.

Unfortunately, though, whatever the psychological explanation, the fact that she did put up with it for so long means that the intimidation tactics of her colleagues did, in effect, work: if they victimised her, it is now indeed the case that her status, in the eyes of the world, is that of victim. In order to win, she has had to prove that. How demoralising to have to win justice at the cost of your reputation.

I can see, though, that it would have been more of a blow if Mrs Clayton hadn't won, then it would have seemed as if the taunts were OK.

I know that it is often just a cheap trick to cite the American way as evidence

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Tim Parks: "Never does the world seem so freshly painted, so brightly enamelled, so new, for heaven's sake, as after the best sex. But, alas, it may be full of new complications, too."

When temptation strikes

If Brahma is a more
endeearing creator than
Jehovah, it is because he
wasn't pleased with
what he had made. He found
the world dull and dusty.
Death was the answer, sug-
gested Siva. Living for ever,
people were bored. A time
limit would galvanise, give
dignity. But that case some
way of replacing the population
would have to be found.

Brahma brought together a
few trusted fellows and explained
what was required. The pleasure took them by
surprise. What was that for?
To put a fresh shine on the
world, they were told. Otherwise it might get dusty again.

I'm always taken aback when people talk about the eroticism of food and drink, of sunbathing and massage. This is mere sensuality. Or avoiding the issue. No experience even remotely compares with true Eros, with long and lavish love-making. It is understandable that people should imagine it was tackled on to creation afterwards, so new, so brightly enamelled, so new, for heaven's sake, as after the best sex. But, alas, it may be full of new complications, too. A lesser authority than Brahma would have issued a health warning.

Over billiards and beer, a
friend is explaining why he is
leaving his wife and two
children. He's playing with
unusual speed and precision.
His eyes are brighter than
the beer could account for. And
the girl is 23, he explains.
French. So intelligent. "Intelli-
gently perky breasts?" I inquire.
"Perceptively warm thighs?"

**MEN
ONLY**

The road to
erotic
passion can
end in
confusion,
says Tim
Parks

young." Thus Franco, potting
the black. "I never experienced
real passion." Before *la jeune*
fille très intelligente, he
means. He is smoking, too,
this evening. I have never seen
him smoke before. "I feel I will
die if I go home." I ask him if
he wants more children. He
doesn't. "Perhaps it's all a
terrible mistake," he says, "but
at least I will have had this
passion." Should I tell him
that when we first met he had
seen very passionate about his
wife?

Women. Another Indian
myth — sexist, if you wish to be
offended — has it that when
the gods became scared of a
man, scared of his developing
spiritual powers, they would
send him a woman. Or they
might send Indra to seduce his
wife and make him jealous. In
either case, the turbulent feelings
would disperse the power
he had accumulated. So Franco,
whose expertise once took him
round all the capitals of Europe,
now finds his life in pieces. Lawyers, quarrels,
turns, departures. Then more
women, too. For if marriage has
a way of declining into
dusty routine, myth-making,
too, can lapse into tawdry
chronicle.

Eroticism has this in
common with an addictive drug:
there is a coercive element to its pleasure with
which part of us is in complicity,
and part not. Thus, men
have always tried to enjoy
eroticism without being
destroyed by it.

Societies, religions can be
defined in the way they deal
with this conundrum. Polygamy,
monogamy with repression,
monogamy with affairs,
serial monogamy. Not to mention
individual solutions of great ingenuity,
or desperation: Victor Hugo with
the door knocked through the wall
of his office, to let in a girl each
afternoon. Auden's flair for
finding call-boys in every town.
Picasso, who simply refused when wife and
mistress demanded that he choose
between them.

But perhaps the thing to
remember when you wake up
with a life full of fresh paint
and tortuous complications is
that eroticism wasn't invented
for you, nor merely for the
survival of the species, perhaps,
but for a divinity's entertainment. Nothing gener-

ates so many opportunities for
frustration and *Schadenfreude*
as eroticism. Which is why it
lies at the centre of so much
narrative. How the gods
thronged the balconies of
heaven to see the consequences
of Helen's betrayal! On the borders
between mythology and history, that
survivor Odysseus was the

first who learnt to trick the
gods. And perhaps his smartest
trick of all was that of
lashing himself to the mast
before the Sirens came within
earshot. There are those, of
course, who are happy to
stand at the railings, even scan
the horizon. Otherwise choose
your mast, find the ropes that
suit you: sport, workaholism,
celibacy with prayerbook and
bell... But the kindest and
toughest ropes of all are
probably to be found in some
suburban semi-detached
with rowdy children and a
woman who never allows the
dust settle for too long.

• Tim Parks's novel *Europa* is
published by Secker & Warburg
on April 14, £9.99.



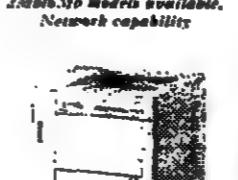
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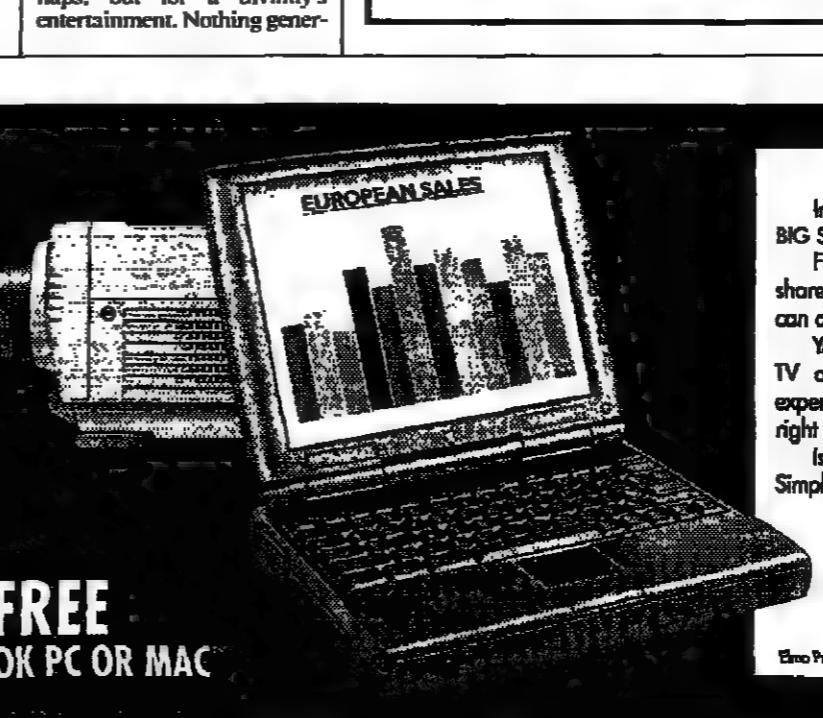
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Is Kosovo the Albanian apocalypse?

Timothy Garton Ash visits a province waiting to erupt

As Albania has descended into mayhem, NATO plotters have agonised over the possibility of violence spilling into neighbouring Kosovo, where nearly two million Albanians live under Serb rule.

No one I spoke to in the dusty, battered and depressed province of Kosovo last week suggested that an Albanian insurrection was imminent. Even if large quantities of small arms were to be smuggled in from the plundered arsenals of Albania, the heavily armed and professionally trained Serb army could wreak terrible vengeance. "You see," both Serbs and Albanians told me, with chilling matter-of-factness, "there are some 700 purely Albanian villages. So the people there could all be killed."

Yet everyone speaks of the longer-term possibility of war — and the seeming impossibility of any peaceful solution. Kosovo has traditionally been regarded by Serbs as the mystical heartland of their great medieval state and national identity, their "Jerusalem". (How much of this is myth and how much reality we shall learn next year with the publication of a history of Kosovo by Noel Malcolm, author of *Bosnia: A Short History*.) In the 1980s, it was an autonomous province in the former Yugoslavia with a largely Albanian population and administration. Many of the remaining Serbs were leaving, often being forced out.

Ten years ago, Slobodan Milošević came to Kosovo and told the local Serbs "No one should dare to beat you!" With this battle-cry, he mounted the Serb nationalist horse and rode it — ably assisted by politicians of other nationalities, and especially by the Croat Franjo Tuđman — to the bloody destruction of Yugoslavia. Kosovo itself was placed under direct Serb administration. The Kosovar Albanians responded by declaring an independent Republic of Kosovo and holding extraordinary underground elections in which a majority voted for the "Democratic League of Kosovo". Its leader, Ibrahim Rugova, became "President of the Republic".

His headquarters is a large hut in the middle of a dusty bus-station, full of picture-book hawkers and spitters. At the door I was incongruously met by the "head of protocol" who ushered me in to see "the President". Mr Rugova told me about the underground state: the 18,000 schoolteachers it funds from unofficial taxes, which the Kosovar Albanians pay in addition to the official Serb ones, the independent university, the attempt at healthcare through an organisation named after Mother Teresa. (Later, I visited a state school divided by an internal Berlin Wall, so that Serb and Albanian children should never meet.) Mr Rugova's immediate demand is merely for an alleviation of the repression. While the Serb police dare not touch him, they regularly harass low-level activists. He

insists on Gandhi-esque peaceful means, and has explicitly cautioned his followers against following the example of armed insurrection across the border. But on the central goal he is quite unfriendly: self-determination for his people, statehood for the republic which he claims already exists.

His main rival, Adem Demaci, sometimes called "the Albanian Mandela", on account of his 28 years in prison, sat opposite me on a chair in his new party headquarters, and, Gandhi-like, pulled up his legs into the lotus position. He might be prepared to settle for slightly less than Rugova: a republic within a very loose confederation with Serbia and Montenegro. But he wants more dramatic protest actions to achieve it. He has called on his followers to imitate the student and opposition demonstrators in Belgrade.

That is the Kosovar Albanian mainstream. But in the past year there have also been a number of terrorist attacks, with responsibility claimed by a Kosovo Liberation Army. Are these the work of impatient young radicals, like the young Palestinians in Gaza? Or — for this is the Balkans —

Milošević might yet play the Kosovo card

ignation, might in desperation play the Kosovo card, provoking a terrorist assault or armed rising which he could then hypocritically suppress.

This may be far-fetched. But Kosovo remains a terrible problem for the diverse opposition parties in the Zajecar ("Together") coalition, which have won power in many cities and are gearing up for Serbian republican elections later this year. Not only are they far from together on this issue, but even those who privately want to concede most of the Kosovar Albanian demands feel that to do so publicly would be political suicide in a country still suffused with national self-pity.

Some have suggested a peaceful partition of Kosovo, giving Serbia its holy places, the mineral resources and main areas of Serb settlement, but these are not compactly contiguous with the mother country. How the line could be drawn without bloodshed and large transfers of population, as in Bosnia, no one has yet explained.

Pathetically, people still look to the West, to "Europe" and above all to America for a solution. An international conference has been proposed, but who would now put their faith in the so-called "international community" and its endless mediators and conferences? I left with a horrible feeling that here, too, the lines may be drawn first in blood. And the Yugoslav tragedy that began in Kosovo may yet end in Kosovo, in this faraway province of which we still know nothing.



PACKAGING RULED TO BE TOO SIMILAR (Court case)

It's the voters wot win it

Politicians pay court to editors, but how much power do papers wield?

So it's all over bar the shouting. It's *The Sun* wot wins it.

As of yesterday, it's *The Sun* wot's won it. In 1995 Tony Blair flew to see Rupert Murdoch in Australia to audition as Prime Minister. The great man approved. Blessing was conferred. New Labour, old Commonwealth. No deals on media ownership, of course. Nothing so crude. These are honourable men who do not nod, nor even wink. Their treaties are fashioned on the wind and written of air, and are the closer for it. Yesterday the mighty organ swung left. Mr Blair's press officer, Alastair Campbell, achieved his ambition, to see a *Labour Sun* rising over Wapping. He has earned his peerage and the chairmanship of Burnley Football Club. The election is over.

Up to a point, your lordship. The 1970 election was the last in which *The Sun* came out for Labour, just after Mr Murdoch bought the paper. The nation defied the pollsters and voted Tory. I doubt if the electorate will be so indiscriminate this time. But Mr Murdoch told Mr Blair two years ago that if their flirtation were ever consummated "we will end up making love like two porcupines, very carefully". If I were Mr Blair I might prefer *The Sun* the way it was.

Yet news that this one paper had come out for Labour sent the BBC into a frenzy of excitement. The *Today* programme could not conceal its glee. If a foreign proprietor had taken a Labour icon and turned it Tory, there would have been howls of outrage about foreign interference in British politics, not least from the Labour Party. This time, I heard not a peep about proprietorial interference from Labour or the BBC. We can only marvel at the infinite mutability of human affairs.

There is nothing like a general election to plunge the upmarket media into an obsession with working-class opinion. Pundits trapse the provinces which they know only as constituency names. So-called "ordinary people" are dragged like Fidelio's prisoners into the political daylight. They are granted a soundbite of their choice before being herded back in the slammer.

At such moments, the world becomes fascinated by the editorial juices of *The Sun*. Most other papers are known territory, pro-Labour or pro-Tory. *The Sun* is a riddle inside an enigma. Its image of eccentric independence comes not just from independence ownership and vast circula-

tion. The paper is deemed to enjoy a hotline to the mental processes of the British proletariat, albeit mostly through the latter's never regions. Such vast readership must bepeak a vast power. Since *The Sun's* own mental processes are often hard to fathom, politicians invest them with the wisdom of Delphos. They wait outside the temple, on steps incarnate with ministerial sacrifice, while proprietor and editor enter into concilie with the nation is held to depend on the outcome.

The rising status of the media is a much-noted feature of British politics. Every memoir testifies to this.

The principal reason is the Prime Minister's sensitivity to press criticism. None of his predecessors has been quite so thin-skinned. His remark yesterday dismissing *The Sun's* move as less important than the media thinks brought a hollow laugh from editors accustomed to Mr Major's telephone calls complaining at the most trivial slight and pleading for kinder treatment. An editor of *The Sun* once replied by telling Mr Major that a large bucket of turd would be on his desk next morning.

The Prime Minister is like an actor who starts each day by re-reading his worst reviews. Political comment is by its nature not flattering to politicians. For Mr Major to start work with such rural self-abasement must be debilitating. Yet he is addicted to the punishment and reference to it peppers his off-the-cuff utterances. His staff cannot rid him of the habit.

The reason is that Mr Major has isolated himself from most of the traditional conduits of Downing Street peer-group review. He has all but disbanded his party in local government. Central Office organisation and research department are pale shadows of their old selves. Elder statesmen are not consulted, and unsympathetic backbenchers are treated as enemies, possibly lunatics.

Mr Major is left only with the press. It offers the one independent running commentary on the Cabi-

net's performance. The Tory press is treated as a stand-alone proxy for Tory supporters in the country. Harassed ministers accord it ridiculous over-importance, in part because their boss does. After the 1992 victory, Lord McAlpine of West Green headed credit on the tabloids. They said they won the election for the Tories, and if politicians "in their hour of victory are tempted to believe otherwise they are in very real trouble next time". This is bizarre. Just as Downing Street expects the whips to deliver the Commons majority, so it seems to expect the Tory press to deliver the nation. Tabloid front pages are portrayed as the Eatanswill of our age.

This is hooey. The search for the cause of the Tories' narrow 1992 election victory has yielded a mountain of research, on the grotesque premiss that credit could not possibly go to Mr Major himself. The principal evidence pointing to *The Sun* was marshalled by Brian MacArthur and Martin Linton, drawn from MORI data gathered in the last week of the campaign. It showed a 4 per cent switch to the Tories among *Sun* readers, ostensibly in response to its strident pro-Tory campaign, compared with lesser swings for *Express* and *Mail* readers. *Sun* readers formed almost half the electorate in key marginals such as Basildon. Hence the extra swing was taken as highly significant. On this basis, the paper could be claimed as moving 200,000 votes from Labour to Tory.

This view has not gone unchallenged. In *Labour's Last Chance*, John Curtice and Holli Semetko polled a large panel of voters during the campaign. They found a small swing from Labour to the Liberal Democrats and a smaller one to the Conservatives. But this did not occur among readers of pro-Tory tabloids, who, if anything, swung away from the Tories, a finding that appears to conflict with MORI. "There was no evidence from our panel," wrote the authors, "that there was any relationship between vote-switching during

the election campaign and the partisanship of a voter's newspaper." Curtice and Semetko pointed out that newspaper readers are now notoriously inclined to shift papers in response to non-political inducements, a fact well-known to editors. Who knows what voting pattern they take with them. Nor can we really tell how many voters might switch at election time to papers that better accord with their own views.

Newspapers love to be credited with far-seeing wisdom. Yet when *The Sun* was accused of exerting huge influence in 1992, it answered that this was "an insult to the 14 million people who voted Conservative". Such disclaimers should be treated like those of television producers denying that their sex and violence films could possibly influence viewers. If those who run the media really believe they have no influence over their consumers, why don't they say so to their advertisers?

My own view is that the support of the press is certainly better than a pox in the eye, especially given the enforced impartiality of broadcasting. If I were a politician I would rather have a newspaper with me than against me, as much for my own morale as for any putative influence over the electorate. The relationship between politicians and papers is that of lover and wayward mistress. The latter is always on the point of leaving. Rows are always painful. Never in recent history has the *Tory* press been so persistently hostile to a Tory government as it has since 1992. The affair has gone on too long and grown stale. *The Sun's* editorial — a gem of terse prose — might have been written of just such an affair: "The Tories have all the right policies but all the wrong faces... after 18 years, they have become sloppy, divided and tired... they need time to sort themselves out."

The Tories' best hope is that readers of *The Sun* have disbanded to the pollsters all along. They never noticed its politics. They will not start now. But then only fools and buck-passers blame the press for election results. Newspapers are about oining democracy's wheels, not replacing them. They may try to relieve the voters of their sovereignty. But the voters have a cussed habit of making up their own minds. They defied prediction in 1945, 1970 and 1992.

The only way to tolerate the next six weeks is to treat the race as deliciously open — or go to bed and stay there.

Alan Coren



■ Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye

Monday, March 17

Dear Diary: One is a bit glum. One has just said goodbye to one's Prime Minister, and one's Prime Minister did that endearingly awkward little bow he does, and gave that charming little smile he gives, and the door closed, and now one hears the creak of the fourth stair as his shoe depresses it, such a sensible shoe, so shined, so neatly laced, almost certainly made in Northampton, and one is decidedly feeling a trifle low. One rather suspects that the next Prime Minister might wear frightfully famous Italian loafers with those little tassels on. The sort dogs snap at.

The object of his visit was to inform one that the date of the general election was to be May 1. He made a little joke about Labour Day, as one would expect of him. One rather fears one has heard the last of his quite excellent little jokes: one will always remember that delightful story about the Irish chicken and the road. How one laughed! One rather suspects that the next Prime Minister might not tell jokes with Irish chickens in them. The greater likelihood is that he will tell very long jokes indeed, of which one will never entirely grasp the point.

One observes that one's Prime Minister did not eat his second Hob-Nob. That is uncharacteristic of him. Perhaps he is a bit glum, too. As he has so often told one, he is very partial to a Hob-Nob. Not quite as partial, mind, as he used to be to the squashed-fly biscuit, about the disappearance of which one was once given a most illuminating lecture. It seems they cannot be obtained in any of the Huntingdon supermarkets for love or money. One rather suspects this not to be a subject upon which the next Prime Minister would be able to shed any light. Worse, one fears he might try to interest one in polenta. Or squid.

Or Web sites. One has heard that he is eager to put all one's loyal subjects onto this. One has, of course, just been put onto it oneself, but one does not have the faintest idea what it is, except that one's loyal subjects may now access, one believes, the word is one's soft furnishings, pictures, pot plants, and so forth. One is not entirely happy with this. One's current Prime Minister never raised fashionable technologies. We did, however, discuss our first bicycles in some depth. By happy chance, we both owned Rudgees. His had drop handlebars and three speeds and a parier which held two bottles of Tizer and enough bread pudding for four people, though it lacked a dynamo, because these cost £2 to £3, and he was saving up for new pads. It seems the buckles on his old ones came undone when he ran. He is most enlightening about cricket: one had never quite understood the googly, before. One rather suspects the next Prime Minister might not be interested in cricket at all. Football seems to be his game — one has seen him, on the television, actually playing it. One fears the worst for future football chats: one has scant interest in soccer, especially since One's Park Rangers were relegated.

One also understands that the next Prime Minister is a member of Trindon Colliery and Dear Hill Working Men's Club, which one somehow doubts to be a prime source of jolly anecdote. One could, one supposes, inquire how Dear Hill came by its name, but the likelihood is that the next Prime Minister would prefer to address matters of greater pith. He went to Oxford and is rumoured to be something of a thinker, whereas the current Prime Minister and one have three O levels and an ATS diploma in lorry-maintenance between us: a situation which, how might one put it, does much to prevent us from boring one another stuff.

And then there is the matter of wives.

One has just peeked from the window. Diary, and watched him walking to his motor car with that special little lop of his. One will rather miss that lop. Oh, see, he has given his special little grin to the driver. One will rather miss that grin. And the way he settles his spectacles with his forefinger. And the way he says "wun". Such a very nice man. How difficult it must be for one's loyal subjects to cast their vote! One is really rather grateful, all things considered, not to have one.

Surprise pitch

AFTER more than 45 years on Westminster's green benches, one would not expect Tony Benn, MP for Chesterfield, to resort to political gimmickry to secure his return at the election. Benn was spurned the other day with a hydraea-sized blue rosette in his buttonhole, watching a football match.

From David Mellor, this kind of laddish behaviour wouldn't raise an eyebrow. But from Benn, a pipe-smoking tea-drinker, it is unusual in the extreme.

He had turned out to watch Chesterfield Football Club beat Wrexham in the quarter-finals of the FA Cup earlier this month, donning their blue and white.

Yesterday, local supporters said they could not remember seeing Tony Benn at the ground before. Sheffield Wednesday supporter and fellow Labour MP Roy Hattersley was scathing. "I imagine it's the first time he's been to a football match in his life," he said. "He was sporting cheap rosettes and looking absolutely ridiculous."

Mr Benn, however, insisted that he supports his constituency team and has previously watched them play at Wembley. He said he was delighted by their success in the FA



Benn: new colours?

intended to express "the smoker's dilemma when he knows he should stop but can't".

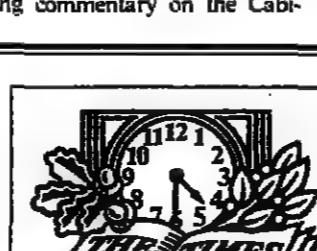
Head man

PAPUA NEW GUINEA's insistence on hiring a British mercenary force to help to put down a long-running insurrection, as reported in yesterday's *Times*, will come as little surprise to Jeremy Hanley, MP — a man who goes down big in the South Pacific.

Visiting the country in October, he was accorded a personal guard armed with a bow and arrow and wearing little more than a skirt of feathers and a Group 4 Security armband.

Though happy in the custody of his warrior, Hanley was alarmed by a conversation that he happened to overhear between the British High Commissioner's wife and the Governor-General's wife. "I have three children," said the former, "a banker, a lawyer, and a headhunter." The latter nodded. "Yes, we have many headhunters over here too."

The politically correct are tightening their grip at the BBC. A documentary tonight on the Fens presented by my colleague Jonathan Meades originally bore the



lively title Land of the Superdykes. For fear of putting off certain viewers, it was renamed Double Dutch.

Walk on

RAMBLERS in Gloucestershire would be well advised to avoid Gatcombe Park, where they risk a frosty reception from its chateleine, the Princess Royal. Interviewed in this week's *Stroud News*, a tremendous local rag, she has little time for the anorak classes.

"Farmers are not warden who manage a whole load of paths for... scramblers and ramblers," she says, adding that bridleways should be reserved for "horse-traffic". Her dislike of pedestrian thoroughfares put her off buying Highgrove, now home to her brother the Prince of Wales, when she was

house-hunting 10 years ago. "There was a footpath running through the middle which we had no chance of moving."

Revelatory

IN THE front row yesterday morning at Labour's first full press conference of the election campaign was the Tory MP Jerry Hayes' homosexual former researcher Paul Stone. After his unsavoury revelations in the *New of the World*, Stone has moved over to Labour and claims to have been in touch with several Labour MPs.

"If I could be useful to Tony Blair

and the party I would love to help," he said by way of an explanation for his attendance. "They're a lot better on gay issues and if I can do anything to publicise these, then I will." By last night Labour was denying all knowledge of his interest. "We've no one registered under that name, and no one remembers seeing him there," said an official.

Late smile

FINALLY, there is a glimmer of a smile on the face of Michael "Captain Grumpy" Atherton, as a result of a posthumous gift from the late Willie Kushion, cartoonist and satirist. In a rare moment of leisure, Atherton was browsing through some prints in a London art gallery last weekend when the establishment's owner handed him a Ruskin original of left-arm spinner Phil Tufnell.

"I couldn't have asked him to pay," says Jack Duncan, founder of the William Ruskin archive. "Willie was a mad-keen cricketer and would have been honoured for the England captain to have



PUBLISH OR BE DAMNED

Sleaze cannot be kept under wraps until after the election

The calling of the election has seen attention, naturally, move from Westminster to the hustings. But important judgments at the polls depend on business which Parliament seems fated not to finish. In preparation for the campaign, the Commons is busying itself with tying up loose ends. There is, one which has been left hanging, like a suspended noose. The report by Sir Gordon Downey into the "cash for questions" allegations against Neil Hamilton and others will not, now, be published until after the election. It is insupportable that an investigation as important as this should, after the months lavished on it, spend the election under lock and key. When democracy needs them most, watchdogs should not be kept in quarantine.

No one is well-served by the suppression of this report. The electors of Tatton will be invited to pass their own sentence on Mr Hamilton at the polls, without having heard the evidence which might either condemn or exonerate him. The Tories have claimed collectively, as loudly as Mr Hamilton has individually, that they have been unfairly tarnished by sleaze. The one document which might, however, restore some confidence will languish unread for the duration of the campaign.

The Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes pointed out yesterday that it is John Major's dissolution, timing which apparently precludes publication. Voters may believe that the Prime Minister could have been motivated by a desire to suppress the report. If so, far from limiting the damage that sleaze might cause, he has only given voters another reason to suspect sharp practice. Mr Major surely cannot want this election to proceed with his candidates awaiting Sir Gordon's judgment.

When the inquiry was set up, in defiance of opposition calls for a full tribunal, Mr

Major said he did not want this matter to be sent into "the long grass". That, however, is where matters now rest and the Prime Minister cannot hide behind parliamentary procedure. Sir Gordon, working a four-day week, has hardly been the Stakhanov of the committee corridors but the primary fault is not his, but the Government's. Lord Nolan may investigate matters after the election but the Tories should want to present the voters with a clean bill of health, not a post-mortem. If the Conservatives want to preserve their reputation they should publish, or be damned.

Although the electorate is short-changed by the non-appearance of the report, the most conspicuous victim is Mr Hamilton. It is difficult to inspire sympathy for the former minister, but in this matter he deserves his portion. The uncontested evidence of his stay at the Paris Ritz at Mohamed Al Fayed's expense and his relationship with the lobbyist Ian Greer raise worrying questions about his judgment. They are not, however, central in the charge against him of corruption. The allegation that Mr Hamilton accepted cash for asking parliamentary questions is bitterly contested.

The main evidence against Mr Hamilton on this charge has, so far, come from Mr Al Fayed and his employees. Thirteen days ago his extraordinary allegation that the Home Secretary had accepted a £1.5 million bribe was "authoritatively" dismissed by Sir Gordon, who found no evidence to support Mr Al Fayed's claims. Sir Gordon is not the first investigator to find Mr Al Fayed's evidence less than reliable. If the electors of Tatton want to know whether or not their Member is a "liar and a cheat" before deciding to vote for him, they cannot, on past record, take Mr Al Fayed's word for it. They need Sir Gordon's.

LAKE IN THE DRINK

Fundraising scandal claims its first political victim

With the withdrawal of Anthony Lake as his prospective CIA Director, President Clinton has suffered the first outright political defeat of his second term. There has been much protest and anger from the Oval Office about the allegedly unfair treatment of his nominee. A poisonous atmosphere of pure partisanship has been blamed for the demise of a clearly qualified candidate. The confirmation process has been condemned as an impediment to the recruitment of worthy citizens to serve in public office.

Much of this is disingenuous. Mr Lake was always a controversial choice to head the Central Intelligence Agency. His background is in the academic world rather than the defence community from which such figures have usually been drawn. He had, at best, a modest record as National Security Adviser in Mr Clinton's first term. During that tenure he had concealed from Congress his knowledge that Iran was providing military assistance to Bosnia's Muslims.

The President moved him from that post as part of a wide-ranging restructuring of his foreign policy team and offered him the CIA position as an alternative. The previous incumbent, John Deutch, had been dropped for admitting publicly that Saddam Hussein had been strengthened by the fratricide among Iraqi Kurds last year. From the moment his name was floated, the Senate intelligence committee made it quite clear that he would be subject to intense scrutiny.

The same Republican Senate that has been accused of vindictiveness accepted virtually all Mr Clinton's other major appointments without dispute. The role of CIA Director has always been treated with exceptional sensitivity. Until the early 1970s Congress had minimal influence over intelligence activities. Since then, Capitol Hill has demanded independent figures whom it

trusted. In 1977, a Democratic Senate informed President Carter that his choice, Theodore Sorenson, would not do. In 1991, President Bush's preference, Robert Gates, barely survived a Senate vote. Mr Lake was at least as contentious this time.

His fate was sealed when he became embroiled in the assorted fundraising scandals that have haunted Mr Clinton since his re-election. The FBI had informed National Security Council staff last June that associates of the Chinese Government were attempting to steer money towards the Democratic Party - a move that was both obviously undesirable and patently illegal. This information apparently never reached Mr Lake nor was it sent to the White House.

On Monday it emerged that Mr Lake had also not been informed that his office had failed to prevent Roger Tamraz, an oil financier, from meeting Mr Clinton. That liaison had been promoted by the chairman of the Democratic National Committee who believed he could solicit a large donation if the President would co-operate. The fact that their proposed sponsor has been wanted in Lebanon on embezzlement charges for a decade seemingly bothered neither party nor President.

The current charged environment in Washington certainly contributed to Mr Lake's downfall but did not exclusively create it. Politics in the American capital has largely ground to a halt while Republicans seek to extract further documentation on how the Clinton-Gore campaign was financed. Those efforts will continue until the Justice Department selects an independent counsel to investigate the affair. It is now as much in Mr Clinton's interests as his opponents that such an appointment be made. In either case Mr Lake is unlikely to be the last casualty of the China connection.

CULTURAL CAMPAIGNS

The British arts festival season is democracy in action

Do not despair. For the next six weeks there is life other than the general election. May 1 is polling day. But it is also the first day of the Glasgow Mayfest, which will continue all month to celebrate all the arts throughout the city. And in it there will be world premieres, famous companies from abroad, drama and controversy, probably about Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's opera *Resurrection*.

And Glasgow is just one of the season of British arts festivals that will run from now until October. Today our Arts Pages publish a selection of 50 of the brightest and best of them. From Easter onwards not a day will pass without festivals in some remote corner, country town or crowded inner city of the land. They range from the blockbusters, such as Edinburgh and Cheltenham, Bath and Brighton, to the specialist, such as Aldeburgh for contemporary music, and York for the early kind. Notting Hill's Carnival has become as famous as those of Rio or New Orleans. There is rock and pop in all their varieties at Glastonbury, Phoenix and Reading, theatre at Chichester, Shakespeare at Arundel, opera at Glyndebourne and the Eisteddfod at Llangollen.

Some festivals are very old. This summer brings the 103rd season of the BBC's Promenade Concerts and the 50th of the Edinburgh Festival. The Hereford Three Choirs is Europe's oldest choral festival. Some festivals are new. This is the second year of the Docklands Festival, and the first

of the Daphne Du Maurier Festival in Cornwall. Depending on how the count is taken, there are now about 500 festivals during the British season. This will not include the thousands of Muggletonian pageants and pig-roastings that last for only a weekend. The number grows every year. Often the standard is extremely high, ambitious and eclectic, bringing top-quality culture in all its international forms to those who live remote from the big cities.

The connection between politics and the arts is closer than is often recognised. Festivals make opportunity, chance and ownership of lasting goods available to all. They can turn the cultural have-nots into cultural haves. It is no accident that the first democracy was founded by the society that invented festivals. Those great celebrations of the first tragedy and comedy were a cement of civil society and a chance to display the genius, as well as the might and wealth, of Athens to the world. The British theatre grew out of the medieval mystery plays. These will be played again at festivals this year, as they have been for more than seven centuries.

Life without the arts makes a barren and uncivil society. The great drama of the general election will occupy centre stage in Britain for the next six weeks. But at the same time the festivals of Britain will show that there is life after politics, connected and commenting on it.

Yours faithfully,
JEREMY BEECHAM
(Chairman, Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
35 Great Smith Street, SW1

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Counter-claims on tax and spending

From the Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Sir, William Waldegrave deceives himself ("Labour's liaison with Leviathan", March 13). He says that Conservatives distrust Leviathan. This from a Government which has centralized power on an unparalleled level and which spends exactly the same share of national income now as it inherited in 1979.

He misleads himself elsewhere as well. The UK growth rate over the last 18 years is less than that achieved by the last Labour Government and is less than the European Union average.

His claims that public sector borrowing is under control don't stand up. By the end of the current financial year the Government will have had to borrow £66 billion more than it promised in 1992. The national debt has doubled since John Major became Prime Minister.

And his claims about our pledged spending commitments don't bear examination either. Indeed, these claims, frequently repeated, are widely discredited. Mr Waldegrave's problem is that, increasingly, no one believes a word this Government says. They sought the trust of the British people in 1992. They have now lost that trust completely.

Yours sincerely,
ALISTAIR DARLING
Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury,
House of Commons.
March 14.

From Mr Paul Ashton

Sir, Lord Healey (letter, March 15) may well be right in claiming that the average family is paying more in taxes as a proportion of income today than in 1978-79 when he was Chancellor; but the tone of his letter suggests that a Labour government would have done better. We may still need some convincing of this.

For example, his party has consistently voted against income tax rate cuts. If the 1978-79 tax rates were still in force now, along with indexed thresholds, the proportion of average earnings taken in tax and national insurance contributions would, I calculate, be almost five percentage points higher today (30.6 per cent against 25.0 per cent).

Further, for Labour to have done better than the present Government on spending as a proportion of GDP, it would have to be spending less than the Government is now doing. I would hazard to guess that not many of us think that likely.

Labour has come a long way in moderating its tax-and-spend policies, but it is a bit much to ask us to believe that taxes and spending would be as low or lower now had Lord Healey's party been in power since 1979.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL ASHTON,
37 Benbow Avenue, Langney Point,
Eastbourne, East Sussex.
March 15.

From Sir David Mitchell,
MP for Hampshire North West
(Conservative)

Sir, Before the last general election John Major made it abundantly clear that he had no intention of increasing taxes. The Opposition attacks him for 22 increases (you can just get to that figure but it takes a bit of mental agility). However, in doing so Labour raises the central question of what it would have done had it been in government in the circumstances in which John Major's Chancellor found himself.

The recession continued longer and deeper than expected. Spending on unemployment and associated benefit rises, government receipts from VAT and corporation tax fell. The Government had either to increase tax or print the money to cover the shortfall.

Is Labour's hidden message that it would have, and would in future, print and return to soaring inflation, as it did before?

Yours faithfully,
DAVID MITCHELL,
House of Commons.
March 17.

Local taxation

From Councillor Sir Jeremy Beecham

Sir, Sir Ronald Watson (letter, March 17) appears to criticise my view that it is necessary for there to be a shift in the proportion of local authority income from the amount raised centrally to that raised locally.

Yet local accountability is impossible without a more explicit connection between local expenditure and local taxation. Sir Ron himself has in the past recognised this in his calls for capping to be ended in order, as he has put it, that local councils should not be allowed to claim either that they are spending at a level permitted by central government or that their inability to provide adequate local services is inhibited by central government.

He also omits to mention that the present Government's own plans foreseen a decrease in the proportion of central funding.

Yours faithfully,
JEREMY BEECHAM
(Chairman, Association of Metropolitan Authorities)
35 Great Smith Street, SW1

Dorrell's plans for long-term residential care for elderly

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

From the Executive Director of ARPOS

Sir, Stephen Dorrell presents his scheme for long-term residential care of the elderly as a major policy decision affecting everyone (report, March 13). In fact, it will do no more than assist a tiny proportion of those who must sell their homes in order to pay for such care. Even they will achieve this only at very considerable cost and with no guarantee that, in the end, the funds will be allocated as they desire.

In June 1996 the National Association of Pension Funds, giving evidence to the Common Health Committee stated that a couple aged 65 would have to pay £315 per month to cover an average-size house. Although figures now being quoted may be slightly lower than this, such estimates are entirely beyond the reach of most people.

Indeed PPP Lifetime has stated that its policyholders typically have assets of more than £250,000.

What is of equal concern is the manner in which funds are eventually made available. It must be proved that the person can no longer perform certain "activities for daily living", with criteria being arbitrarily fixed by the insurance company. In many cases payments will then be made directly to the care provider.

It is difficult to avoid the feeling that policy of this kind is mere tokenism, diverting attention from the real problem, which is the growing neglect of the 95 per cent of dependent people who are cared for in their own homes and for whom essential services are rapidly disappearing.

Yours faithfully,

DONALD W. STEELE,
Executive Director,
ARPOS (Association of
Retired and Persons Over 50),
Greenoak House,
Francis Street, SW1.
March 13.

From the Chief Executive of Scope

Sir, Mr Dorrell's White Paper presents a dramatic shift in policy, placing responsibility for care needs onto the individual disabled person and their family. If the Government contracts out of care provision, not only of residential services but also the vast amount of care services provided to people in their own homes, disabled people could be left without choice and without a safety net.

Yet again we see the rights and needs of disabled people sidelined in favour of penny-pinching policies.

Yours faithfully,

RICHARD BREWSTER,
Chief Executive,
Scope (formerly The Spastics Society),
12 Park Crescent, W1.
March 14.

From Mr Robert Waterhouse

Sir, A simple way to deal with the problem of the cost of residential care for the elderly would surely be through death duties. Alteration to the current exemption system, so that the estate of all persons dying over retirement age (irrespective of whether they had themselves benefited from residential care) were subject to a modest and clearly defined deduction, for example as a percentage.

Such a system, I suggest, would be

simple to administer and fair to everyone; it would be vastly superior to the Government's proposals involving insurance companies, the main beneficiary of which would, I suspect, be those companies and not the citizens of this country.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT WATERHOUSE,
5 Heatherbank, Chislehurst, Kent.
March 12.

From Ms Tessa Harding

Sir, Professor Alan Williams of the Centre for Health Economics at the University of York suggests that discriminating against the elderly is an "appropriate" way of rationing scarce health resources (report, March 14). Is he seriously saying that this country is so poor that it cannot afford healthcare for its older people?

If we spend a lower proportion of our GDP (under 7 per cent) on health than nearly all OECD countries, it is because we choose to, not out of economic necessity.

Certainly we could and should be doing more to help older people retain their independence. We could be making sure people's homes are warm and well insulated; that public transport is convenient and accessible; that corner shops and village post offices stay open; that there is enough good primary and other domiciliary care available when people need it. To take these "unglamorous measures" would make both human and economic sense and help people remain independent, as they wish. But we are not doing that either at present.

It is not a question of choosing between those sensible measures and high-quality healthcare; we need both. Once we start making judgments about the value of people's lives on the basis that they belong to a particular group or class in society, we are on a very slippery slope. Discrimination on grounds of age is no more acceptable than discrimination on grounds of race, gender or class.

Yours etc,

TESSA HARDING
(Head of Planning and Development),
Help the Aged,
St James's Walk,
Clerkenwell Green, EC1.
March 17.

France and Africa

From the Ambassador of France

Sir, I was very surprised to read in your editorial of March 12, "Back to Fashoda", some particularly harsh comments on French policy vis-à-vis central Africa.

France is no way suffering from "Fashoda syndrome", and, in our view, the rivalry which you allege exists between France and British interests in Africa belongs completely to the past. Just like our major partners, we are directing our efforts on the African continent towards promoting the rule of law, good governance and sustainable development.

As regard the crisis in Zaire's South Kivu province, France is working in close co-operation with the United States and the United Kingdom and shares with them the desire to see the rapid and full implementation of Security Council Resolution 1097, unanimously adopted on February 18.

It is against this background and because the situation of the hundreds of thousands of Kivu refugees has become tragic that on March 10 the President of the Republic issued a solemn appeal to the international community immediately to stop the fighting and provide the humanitarian aid which is most urgently needed.

Our policy is also directed towards guaranteeing Zaire's sovereignty and territorial integrity, ending foreign interference and promoting dialogue in the run-up to Zairean elections and the organisation of an international conference bringing together the countries of the Great Lakes region in order to achieve a lasting solution to the current crisis. I note that the peace plan of the United Nations Secretary-General's special representative and the OAU has endorsed these objectives.

Finally, I am especially shocked to read the allegation that France "armed and backed the Hutu killers in Rwanda". Right from the onset of the Rwandan crisis, we have been striving, harder than any other country, to promote a political solution and mobilise the international community in order to prevent ethnic clashes. Indeed, France stopped sending any military hardware to Rwanda on April 8, 1994 - ie, before the United Nations imposed an embargo on arms supplies to that country on May 17, 1994. Furthermore, France was the first to use the term "genocide" to describe the events which took place in Rwanda after April 6, 1994, and actively supported the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal to try those responsible for those crimes.

France's action in the whole of Africa is not in any way prompted by racism, but by the firm belief that only by acting as one can the international community effectively help Africa cope with the immense challenges confronting it.

Yours faithfully,<br

OBITUARIES

SHIREEN AKBAR

Shireen Akbar, MBE, head of adult and community education at the Victoria and Albert Museum, died of cancer on March 8 aged 52. She was born on July 13, 1944.

Shireen Akbar was a courageous and innovative arts and community educator, whose work earned her not just an MBE but an international reputation. Through her own example she encouraged two generations of South Asian women — many of them lacking confidence and opportunities, and with English as their second language — to aspire to improve their lives.

She also persuaded major museums to open their doors to the South Asian community. She developed arts education programmes which enabled thousands of women to join the threads of their personal experience in order to create works of art of extraordinary beauty and power.

Born Shireen Hasib in Calcutta, she grew up in an influential Bengali family which moved after Partition to what was to become Bangladesh. She was educated at Vidyamala School and Holy Cross College in Dhaka and at Cambridge University, remaining in Britain to become a teacher in London.

In 1979 she took up a post at Bethnal Green Adult Institute as a language tutor for Asian girls and women. Always quick to perceive people's needs, she recognised that the racial abuse experienced by Asian women outside their homes — and the restrictions placed upon them by their own communities — necessarily meant that language teaching should be only one aspect of her work.

She established links for



Shireen Akbar with a group of schoolchildren in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Nehru Gallery of Indian art

Bangladeshi children between home and school and became an interpreter for families who did not have an English speaker. She collected children from school so that their parents would not worry about their safety, and took them to visit places they would not otherwise have seen. At that time she was virtually alone in this kind of work, and her initiatives redefined community education in London.

They also led directly to *Our Exhibition*, an exhibition in 1982 at the Commonwealth

Institute of art work done by Bangladeshi children. Two years later, by now working for the Inner London Education Authority, she travelled to India and Bangladesh to collect resource material to support multicultural work undertaken by teachers. In 1986 she helped to organise the exhibition *Crafts of Bangladesh* at the Crafts Council which travelled to Birmingham and Bradford. She then raised £5,000 to purchase the exhibition as a permanent resource for schools. adult

education institutions and community centres in east London. These collections are still in use today.

The success of *Crafts of Bangladesh* persuaded the Whitechapel Art Gallery to employ her in 1988 to help to organise *Woven Air*, an exhibition of Bangladeshi textiles, for which she also developed an acclaimed education programme. This proved to be a milestone in her work and was swiftly followed by a commission from the Museum of Mankind to create the exhibition *Traffic Art*, a collection of rickshaw paintings. Through all of these exhibitions Shireen sought to show the continuing beauty and depth of the arts of Bangladesh.

In 1991 she joined the staff of the Victoria and Albert Museum as the first Education Officer in charge of multicultural education and the period of her greatest achievement began. Building on her earlier experience in Tower Hamlets, and inspired by the great South Asian collections in the museum, she developed

a remarkable educational experiment which will endure as a pioneering example of the way in which museums can, and must, communicate the magic and excitement of their collections to people of all ages and different cultural backgrounds.

Supported by the generosity of the Hamlyn Foundation she conceived and brought to fruition *The Mughal Tent Project*. Using the tent as a symbol of home of refuge, of dispossession and of art she travelled the length and breadth of England inspiring groups of South Asian women to visit the alien environment of the museum galleries and to rediscover their heritage, and to rediscover their creativity and their self-esteem.

From this initial contact with the V&A, often the first time the participants had ever visited a museum, she formed groups to work together in making a tent hanging which would express their aspirations and release their creativity. To her surprise, a project primarily developed for Asian women became a source of inspiration for women from many other communities as widely separated as Los Angeles and South Africa. Using a diversity of techniques, embroidery, collage and paint, they created a sequence of brilliant panels which will go on display in the museum in the summer in the exhibition *Shamiana: The Mughal Tent*.

The success of this project was an example of the power of simple actions to communicate across the divide of religion, education and culture. The power and beauty of these tent panels will be an abiding monument to Shireen Akbar's indomitable spirit.

She was divorced from her husband and is survived by a daughter.

ROBERT DICKE

Robert Dicke, American physicist, died in Princeton, New Jersey, on March 4 aged 90. He was born in St Louis, Missouri, on May 6, 1916.



the war working on radar, returning to Princeton in 1946. He remained there for the rest of his life, from 1975 as Albert Einstein Professor of Science.

Dicke's experiments on mass supported Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, by showing that gravitational mass (measured by weighing) is the same as inertial mass (measured by resistance to acceleration) to one part in 100 billion. But in 1961 he challenged Einstein's legacy by putting forward, with the graduate student Carl Brans, the idea that gravity might vary with time, becoming weaker as the Universe expanded. This theory ultimately proved at variance with the data, and had to be abandoned, but Dicke remained a major gravitational theorist and contributed greatly to the renaissance of gravity studies that he had begun in the 1950s.

Dicke combined the skills of the experimentalist with those of the theorist, not a common combination. He held more than 50 patents, most of them relating to his work on radar, but he also anticipated the invention of the laser, creating a similar device intended to work with infra-red radiation.

Dicke is survived by his wife Annie, whom he married in 1942, and by a daughter and two sons.

BRIAN
MERRIKIN HILL

Brian Merrikin Hill, poet, died on February 19 aged 79. He was born on June 6, 1917.



A REGIONAL poet whose voice was for a long time not known outside the North of England where he wrote, Brian Merrikin Hill often took as his subject his native Tyneside and Yorkshire, where he worked as a teacher. He has been described by David Gascoyne as "one of the most unjustifiably neglected poets of the age".

He was born in Newcastle, upon Tyne, the son of a Methodist minister. Two teachers at the Heaton Secondary School in Newcastle nurtured in him a reverence for Shelley and for French poetry; this was to lead him eventually to Oxford, where he read English. Years later, he had two books of translations from the French published: *Saint-Pol-Roux* (Mammon Press, 1986) and *With Planetary Eyes* (University of Salzburg, 1993).

The poverty of Tyneside marked the poet; he was nine at the time of the General Strike. His socialist father was cold-shouldered by some of the better-off of his flock because of his sympathy with those who were out of work.

From such experiences Hill developed an anger at social injustice which found its expression in *Conversational Elegies for a Tyneside Kid*. Although never a believer in traditional Christianity, Hill, like his father, never ceased to seek spiritual redemption for mankind in a world that so often seemed askew.

After leaving Oxford, he taught for some years in private schools, moving in 1948 to the progressive Wennington School, Wetherby, Yorkshire; he was headmaster in his last four years there. He retired from teaching in 1978 in order to devote himself to poetry, in which he carved out for himself a second, more enduring career.

The gift had always been there. His *Eighteen Poems* (1947) is a collectors' item. But a second pamphlet, *Two Poems of Pilgrimage*, did not appear until 1977. Extracts from both publications are to be found in Hill's last collection, *Dolphins and Outlaws*, published by the University of Salzburg in its series *Salzburg Studies in English Literature*.

— *Poetic Drama and Poetic Theory*. Arguably, his finest achievements are the personal poems of *Wakeful in the Sleep of Time* (Taxi Press, 1984) and *Local History* (Littlewood Press, 1985) and, because of their social content, *The European Letters* (Taxi, 1987).

The teacher in him remained. He joined the small Yorkshire poetry group the Pennine Poets in the 1970s and had poems published in their magazine *Pennine Platform*.

Three years later he took over the editorship of the magazine

and continued to publish it regularly until his last illness, making it a vehicle for his own ideas and beliefs. His critical writings were instructive, if idiosyncratic. He was never influenced by fashion.

He is survived by his wife Irene, and their son and daughter.

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Science: the bitter pill forced down once a year

Why does the Sun still go round the Earth?

Time once again for National Brainwashing Week. Hype as insidious as Mother's Day is now in progress to convince us that we ought to pay more attention to the old dear. I refer, of course, to science. National Science Week was dreamt up four years ago by the Department of Trade and Industry to give all those worthy enterprises that already knock themselves out in the name of science a chance to do more of it with the hope that this time some of the "don't cares" will pay attention.

I have nothing against science. Years ago I was chairman of the Association of British Science Writers for two years. Field trips, such as going to see the dinosaur tracks in the Connecticut River Valley or the CERN particle accelerator near Geneva, are among my cherished memories. But I do hate Thought Police, and what is being done in this week, which has no particular claim on the calendar except the theme gap between Mother's Day and Easter, feels like propaganda. Newspapers are pretty immune but the BBC has swallowed it whole.

In aid of what? The one conclusion to be drawn from previous science weeks is that they have had no effect whatsoever. Belief in the supernatural, the irrational, the paranormal has never been higher. Many newspapers would sooner dispense with their weather reports than with their astrologist. Every so often a poll shows that many people still think that the Sun goes round the Earth: it's just common sense, as we can all see for ourselves every night when the sun goes down.

For the converted, Britain is well served. The science programmes on radio and television, and the pages in the newspapers, are very good. BBC2's *Horizon*, at its new grown-up time of 9.25pm on Thursdays, is drawing well over five million viewers a week — impressive when you consider that the alien-haunted *X-Files* gets seven million. Why not tell some other branch of knowledge that it ought to try harder to spread enlightenment? Why not National Economics Week? I'm sure we all need help telling the difference between GDP and GNP.

I don't buy the argument that Dolly the cloned sheep has made science more interesting to a wider public. What excites people is ethics, religion and survival, not science. They are alarmed at threats to their sense of identity and their cherished beliefs. They want to know what the law should do to control future research. What they do not want to hear is the scientific truth: that nurture is as important as nature in shaping the individual, sheep or child. Dr Steve Jones, the geneticist, puts it best: "If you want



BRENDA MADDUX

to design your son's future, send him to Exxon." No genetic engineering, he says, will produce such a guaranteed result.

The main lesson about science is failing to get through. Science is a method, not a body of established fact, a way of overturning certainties, not of proclaiming them. How many times in this past agonised year of BSE have you heard someone say "I wish they'd just tell us the truth"? As if "they", the scientists, were somehow like the Cabinet, a group who know something they are not telling, rather than disparate investigators around the world puzzled by a disease for which there is still no absolutely proven link to human beings. I once heard a Russian ask my husband, then Editor of *Nature*, the British science journal: "How much of what you print is wrong?"

"All of it," was the answer. That is, in time, today's knowledge will be supplanted.

That warning ought to be at the beginning of all so-called "science" programmes. I would improve them another way. Before plunging into a discussion of Fermat's Last Theorem or the beauty of the square of the number minus-one (see tonight's *Seven Wonders of the World* on BBC2), I would set on the screen "Understand this programme, what you should know is..." Then, at the end, before those endless lists of credits which thank every museum, photo archive and laboratory from here to Yucatan, I would say "What this programme has shown is..."

I would not try to dress up health, diet, religion and gee-whiz gadgetry as "science". I would not try to teach the Second Law of Thermodynamics without explaining what the First Law is. And I would say that scientists who admit to uncertainty are the trustworthy ones. Above all, I would stop insulting science by treating it as a bitter pill that has to be sugared and forced down once a year.

I have always told American friends that Britain did not need presidential-style television debates because the party leaders face each other all the time in the House of Commons. Yet the American model does seem to have stirred an appetite in Britain for encounters more direct and less predictable than the ritualistic *Question Time*. Why not then go the whole American hog and ask the Prime Minister to give regular televised press conferences? Even if these did not yield great moments — such as the veteran reporter May Craig's question to John F. Kennedy: "Mr President, what are you doing for women?" — they would let fresh air into a closed system.

Eight MPs ready for any action

FIGHTING the general election may seem like small beer to eight intrepid MPs who agreed to experience the rigours of military life for a year as part of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme. Their exploits, which were recorded by a BBC2 documentary team, make taking to the hustings look like a doodle.

In the first two programmes in the series, *Politicians on Parade*, Lady Olga Mailland, the Conservative MP, is pitted against John Home Robertson, a Labour colleague, on the Army firing range. Lady Olga apparently took with gusto the challenge of training with the Forces, but admitted she had cheated a little and had hidden an essential lipstick in one of the pockets of her fatigues.

Other game MPs who took part include the Tories Peter Luff and Sir Roger Moore, and the Labour members Andrew Miller and Paddy Tipping.

The final episode shows the Tory Piers Merchant and the Labour Gerry Steinberg experiencing their first Hawk jet

Mix-ups: John Prescott and Jane Moore of *The Sun*

flight. To prepare for the flight the two were put in a decompression chamber and suffered such bad memory loss that Mr Steinberg could not remember the name of the Prime Minister. It is tragic what some MPs will do to get on the telly.

A new front page was drawn up with a huge picture of Mr Prescott looking solemn if not exactly dead, and a team of reporters leapt into action, telephoning hospitals, the emergency services and the Castle. Twenty minutes later, Mr Prescott rang the newsdesk and said: "Er, that's all this about me 'avin' heart attack? Some bugger's been winding you up." Suspi-

Mix-ups: John Prescott and Jane Moore of *The Sun*

cion has fallen on hacks from rival papers.

• **GOOD news for pluggers.** Channel 5 has made record companies an offer it hopes they cannot refuse. Artists with new releases will be able to get free plugs not once but three times in one day. You provide the artist, the station promises, and we will get them on *Exclusive*, the five-nights-a-week entertainment news show presented by the Virgin Radio DJ Jonathan Coleman, plus on the late-night chat show presented by Jack Docherty and *Five's Company*, the afternoon magazine programme hosted by a posse of bright young things. How happy the audience coverage, however, is another matter.

Dressy award

AT THE British Press Awards at the Royal Lancaster Hotel, Jane Moore, women's editor of *The Sun*, was approached by a slavering male boy who thrust a metal boy into her hands and said: "I'd like you to take this award for being the best-dressed person here."

The next morning, she realised what she had been given — *The Guardian's* award for team reporting. Over in Farringdon Road there was

much beard-stroking and pencil-chewing among *The Guardian's* diggers about the whereabouts of their trophy.

Ms Moore used it as a paperweight in her Wapping office until the joke wore thin and then she biked it back to Alan Rusbridger, Editor of *The Guardian*, with a note saying: "It's a long, tedious story, but hopefully you'll know who this belongs to."

Ms Moore received a note of thanks saying: "Not since the Jules Rimet trophy (World Cup) disappeared in 1966 has there been such a thing..."

Model writer

WHEN *GQ Active*, Conde Nast's new monthly handbook for outdoor types, is launched next month, it will be heavy on celebrity columnists with the model Yasmin le Bon writing the motoring column and the footballer-wine buff Lee Chapman advising readers on drinks.

"Yasmin just loves driving and knows a lot about cars," trills a spokeswoman. "And Lee has a very extensive and valuable cellar. We know their capabilities."

• **Callers to *The Sun*, the newspaper that backs Tony Blair, yesterday received a cheery greeting from staff: "Hello, the New Sun."**

Attitude-altering slaps

ADVERTISING

BRITVIC Soft Drink is hoping to repeat the soaring success of its 1991 campaign for Orange Tango by launching an anarchic commercial which exploits the countdown to the general election.

The ad features caricatures of MPs being humiliated in a typical Orange Tango scenario. It will break on March 30 on Channel 5, which begins broadcasting on the same day. Channel No. 5 says it will be the first ad to air on the new station.

Britvic changed the face of soft drinks advertising with its Orange Man slapping people in the face. Sister brands Apple, Lemon and Blackcurrant Tango have used similarly off-the-wall work, with Blackcurrant Tango last week picking up the Best Commercial of the Year prize at the British Television Advertising Awards for its "St George" ad filmed on the cliffs of Dover.

THE Institute of Practitioners in Advertising has run a competition among communications students to create an advertising campaign that will stir apathetic 18 to 25-year-olds into voting.

Fewer than 45 per cent of young people bothered to vote in the last election — an issue that was tackled by a rather lacklustre £750,000 government campaign last year and was debated only last week in the House of Lords.

One winning entrant suggested hiring a youth icon such as Chris Evans to front a rousing campaign to push teenagers towards the polling station.

Perhaps it is not surprising that today's youth feels disenfranchised. One statistic unearthed by the stu-

dents was that 175 MPs are aged over 60 and only 25 under 40.

AGENCY brows will furrow at the news that Stella Artois is siphoning much of its advertising budget this summer into sponsorship and marketing.

The UK's premium lager is injecting £25 million into linking its name with film entertainment by means of, among numerous other projects, broadcast sponsorships of movies on both Channels 4 and 5 and national sponsorship of Virgin's "Big Screen" film round-up show.

Any advertising activity will be virtually lost among all this, with plans for only a modest £750,000 cinema campaign through its agency Lowe Howard-Sparks. Last year's total ad spend was a sturdier £4.2 million.

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Channel 5 sets out its new order of the day

Celebrities and comedies to fill the unexploited time slots, reports Alexandra Frean

For the past few months, Dawn Airey, the director of programmes at Channel 5, has been keeping a diary chronicling the ups and downs of her efforts to get the nation's newest television station on air on March 30. Much to the dismay of her boyfriend, she sits down for three hours every Saturday, her only "day off", to write it.

If Airey goes the way of other media launch bosses and loses her job after a few months, she may well find that that diary comes in useful: many publishers would no doubt be interested in publishing *The Confessions of a Channel 5 Insider*.

Airey is too busy to give the idea of failure more than a fleeting thought, however. "I spend all of my days in meetings solving problems. Problem-solving is what I am good at — that and making decisions quickly. Only at around 8pm can I start doing the rest of my work," she says.

Unlike Channel 4, launched 15 years ago proclaiming its minority remit with "Viewers Keep Out" signs all over it, Channel 5 is entering a market hungry for more choice, and expecting to have its mass-market tastes catered for. The margins for error are therefore quite small.

There is a big expectation from both the audience and the advertising community for us to perform well immediately. The audience won't tolerate anything that is of a lesser standard than we see elsewhere," Airey summarises. She later admits, however, that at least one show in her schedule is a "real turkey".

Airey has already revealed Channel 5's programming hand quite extensively, placing emphasis on its user-friendly "stripped and stranded" approach to scheduling and its heavy reliance on American imports. Britain's first daily soap, *Family Affairs*, will run at 6.30pm; a celebrity gossip show at 7pm; nature and wildlife programmes at 7.30pm; the news at 8pm; leisure and lifestyle shows at 8.30pm and a night movie at 9pm. It is hardly earth-shattering stuff.

Where advertisers believe that Channel 5 seems most likely to make its presence felt is at the margins of its schedule, in the afternoon and late



Dawn Airey believes there is "an expectation to perform well immediately"

at night. These are areas where the existing terrestrial channels have a patchy record. Although the audiences are small at this time of day in absolute terms, Channel 5 is well placed to do well in terms of audience share.

Airey describes her mid-afternoon programme, *Five's Company*, as a "high-energy gang show" presented by bright young things and offering chat, celebrity interviews and games and quizzes that the audience can play at home. "It will have the feel of a radio phone-in show on television," Airey says.

"All the existing broadcasters now recognise that there's a potentially large audience in the afternoon. I tried to cater for it when I was at Channel 4 with *Love in the Afternoon*, which was aimed at young housewives," she adds.

Rival broadcasters have already taken note and begun to schedule competitively against

Channel 5. "Channel 4 has just launched *Pet Rescue and Collectors Lot* in the afternoons, and ITV has gone into the afternoon on a network, not a regional, basis. That is a direct result of us. All of those shows are catering for an older audience, and yet half the audience available to view at that time is under 50," Airey says.

The other slot where advertisers believe that Airey has placed herself in a strong position is post-1pm, which has a distinctly "young urban male" feel. Airey hopes to achieve every day at this time what Channel 4 and BBC2 have already achieved on Friday nights. That is, to create a raft of youth-oriented comedy programmes aimed at those too young to be in bed but not satisfied with life to be out trying to change the world.

Although Airey won't say

so, the shows are clearly expected to push the boundaries of taste and decency to the limits and to take Channel 5 beyond the audience that actually watches it. With few light alternatives on the rival channels, the slot might just be one where the channel's audience share rises above the 5 per cent which Airey says she is aiming for overall.

Airey is also pinning her faith in Channel 5's nightly showbiz gossip programme, *Exclusive*, presented by the Virgin Radio DJ Jonathan Coleman. She intends to generate publicity for the show by feeding titbits from it — (yet more) celebrity interviews, star scandals, Hollywood casting tips etc — to the tabloid papers. "I expect the programme to result in stories in the press every day."

She denies that the programme will run out of ideas. "Every day there are five terrestrial channels and 30-odd satellite channels. There are masses of stories concerning the stars," she says.

A joker in the pack for Airey may well prove to be the channel's Saturday evening prime-time light-entertainment show, *Night Fever*. Based on a format bought in from the French broadcaster TFI, it has all the madcap exuberance and intellectual paucity of Chris Evans's *Don't Forget Your Toothbrush*. The programme, hosted by the Madness singer Suggs, pits celebrity teams against each other in a topical quiz punctuated by karaoke singing contests, where the audience — including those at home — expected to join in. It is daft, but it might just catch on.

Claiming that she always wants to offer an alternative to the other main channels, rather than present them with head-to-head competition, Airey says she has no intention of copying Channel 4 and BBC2 by running themed seasons. Instead, she is hoping to run evenings built around a major special event, such as the British Fashion Awards, one of the few glamour events still not given the full TV treatment.

Scottish stand-up comedian, has been given a chat show based on the American David Letterman format. It will include more celebrity guests, live music, scripted gags and topical chit-chat. The potential returns of such a show are high, particularly given the lack of any real competition in the evening chat show stakes. However, previous attempts to introduce *Letterman-style* programmes into the UK have failed miserably, even with presenters as experienced as Danny Baker and Jonathan Ross, so the Doherty strategy is a risky one.

The programme will be followed by several strands of risqué comedy programming, such as monologues by Jenny Eclair, a sketch show called *We Know Where You Live*, a celebrity quiz show *Bring Me the Head of LE* (Light Entertainment) and a medical quiz show, *Tubs and Fibs*.

Although Airey won't say

AS commuters emerged from mainline stations in London on Monday morning they were assailed with an unusual sound. Instead of the roar of the traffic, they heard the skirl of the pipes. This was not, as you may imagine, the result of some uncomplicated Jacobite business from 1745, it was a marketing exercise.

The launch of *The Scotsman* as a properly distributed national newspaper in the South East. From this week, late editions of a publication which calls itself Scotland's National Newspaper will be flown down from Edinburgh to London, reaching the warehouses early enough for it to be on sale in the newsagents alongside the London-based *Scotsman*.

Scottish news, opinion and up-to-date football results, will now be available on breakfast tables in Mornington Crescent as well as Morningside for the first time since the paper was founded in 1817.

It is the fulfilment of a dream long held. Hitherto *The Scotsman* has trundled down by train, arriving too late to reach any but a scattering of outlets. Its London sale, as a result, has rarely risen above 12,000, and frustrated expatriates have waxed

life north of the Wash. On the other hand, the idea that *The Scotsman* might become a latter-day *Manchester Guardian*, fulfilling a need for a non-metropolitan voice in the South, is probably unrealistic.

At the point where

The Guardian went

"national" in 1961, it

already had more

than 40,000 readers

in the South, with

every evidence that

this was only the tip

of the iceberg. In

today's television age, there is unlikely to be

a huge demand for a paper from the north,

outside a small circle of Scottish exiles, and

institutions with an interest in Scottish

markets and politics. My bet is that a gain of

5,000, modest as that may sound, is about

the right target.

Of more concern to its existing readers is

the paper's political stance. It has long been

axiom that *The Scotsman* is the voice of

devolution, a left-of-centre, decentralist,

radical paper, representing the broad con-

sensus of Scottish opinion, out of sympathy

with successive Tory administrations, and

committed to political reform. That may all

be about to change.

Monday's edition announced that

the paper now believes

Labour's plans for a

Scottish parliament

to be "grievously

wounded" because of

its failure to answer

the West Lothian question. The idea

that Scottish MPs

should be allowed to

debate English mat-

ters at Westminster

while English MPs

had no say over Scotti-

sh issues is, the

paper argues, dis-

honest and unworkable

arrangement with the *Financial Times* in

come to naught, but there are other iron in

the fire.

The question now is: what will it achieve,

and whose interests are being served? As

outlined by the paper's Editor, Martin Clarke,

its Editor-in-Chief, Andrew Neil, and its

Chief Executive, Bert Hardy, are modest:

possibly 3,000 to 5,000, rising to 10,000 in a

few years. On purely financial grounds that

hardly counts as a worthwhile exercise. A

similar investment in Glasgow, where the

paper currently has only a wretched 6,000

circulation, would produce better results.

But London is where the paper's owners

would like to make their mark. They want

The Scotsman to be talked about as a

national rather than a regional paper, they

want it to feature on the *Today* programme,

they want it to be noticed.

And so it should be. In the run-up to a

general election and in its aftermath,

Scottish devolution will be a key issue. To be

able to read about it from a Scottish

perspective in London should be invaluable

for anyone who believes there is intelligent

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NEWS

Tories abandon school plans

Plans to allow greater selection and the expansion of grant-maintained schools were sacrificed by the Government in the rush to clear the legislative decks before Parliament rises on Friday for the general election.

On the second day of the election campaign, Conservative business managers were forced, during negotiations with their Labour counterparts, to drop 19 clauses from the education Bill, including plans which they said would pave the way for a grammar school in every large town. **Pages 1, 8, 9**

Ministers lose fast track to Lords

John Major is preparing to break with tradition by declining to give peerages to all the former senior ministers who are retiring. He believes peerages should go to senior figures likely to carry on working for the Conservative cause. **Page 1**

Thatcher papers

Baroness Thatcher announced that she is giving her huge archive of papers on permanent loan to Churchill College, Cambridge, to allow scholars to study her premiership. **Page 1**

Zaire threat

The prospects of a military coup in Zaire grew after the Parliament passed a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister. **Pages 1, 15**

Cash for questions

The postponement of the publication of the Commons report on the cash for questions affair will be the subject of a new investigation by the Nolan committee on standards in public life. **Page 2**

Surgeon shot dead

A British surgeon died in his wife's arms after being shot at a remote police checkpoint in the Congo when he argued with armed policemen. **Page 3**

Cheaper discs

A price war has erupted between supermarkets which are offering big discounts on Top 40 compact discs in an effort to win the lucrative music market. **Page 4**

Cricket strip

Members of the country's oldest first-class cricket club were surprised to find the nude figure of their beleaguered club secretary gracing the pages of *British Naturism* magazine. **Page 5**

Yes, we have five billion bananas

Bananas have replaced apples as Britain's most popular fresh fruit, with about five billion eaten every year. It is a far cry from the Second World War when Britons had to make do with a concoction of mashed parsnips flavoured with sugar and banana essence. The Government gave one to everyone under the age of 18 when the first postwar supplies arrived. **Page 1**



Girls in past and present Putney High School uniforms at the Albert Hall for the 125th anniversary of the Girls' Public Day School Trust.

Birth alert

Women are being subjected to unnecessary Caesarean and forceps deliveries which cause them injury and waste resources, a health service watchdog says. **Page 6**

Elvis victory

A former barrow boy won his High Court battle against America's Elvis Presley industry over the right to sell novelty soaps and trinkets to British fans. **Page 7**

BBC board attacked

The BBC's Board of Governors, a group of part-time, well-intentioned amateurs drawn from the great and the good, should be abolished, the Heritage Select Committee said. **Page 10**

Albanian tension

The flood of Albanians fleeing across the Adriatic to southern Italy approached 10,000 with reports of growing tension between residents and immigrants. **Page 12**

German uproar

The Ruhr was in uproar as Germany's snowballing protest movement switched its focus from the coal pits to the steel foundries. **Page 13**

Clinton worry

President Clinton's controversial fundraising antics claimed a member of his inner circle when Anthony Lake withdrew his nomination as Director of the CIA. **Page 14**

BUSINESS

Gas charge: BG may have to knock billions of pounds off the value of its assets following the completion of a Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation. **Page 25**

VAT loophole: The Treasury is losing millions of pounds of VAT because HM Customs and Excise is not rigorous enough in its checks on large organisations, says a report by the National Audit Office. **Page 26**

Borrowing on target: The Government is expected to beat its public sector borrowing target this year after new figures showed only a small rise in the PSBR. **Page 25**

Markets: The FTSE 100 fell 0.4 to 957, falling from DM2.6817 to DM2.6643 and \$1.5868 to \$1.5876. **Page 28**

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SPORT

Rugby union: John Richardson, the Rugby Football Union president, has denied claims by Fran Cotton, the Lions manager, that England and France seek to break away from the Five Nations. **Page 44**

Football: Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, is expecting a disciplined performance against FC Porto in the European Cup quarter-final. **Page 48**

Boxing: Nigel Mansell, the former Formula One world champion, made a successful start in the Sunningdale Foursomes, winning by 3 and 2. **Page 43**

Cricket: The Grand Hotel, Brighton, is the grandiose setting for what is expected to be a stormy annual meeting of Sussex County Cricket Club. **Page 48**

Review reviewed: A production at the King's Head, Islington, trawls through three decades of satirical songs and sketches. **Page 39**

Roll up, roll up: From Kathleen Turner treading the boards at Chichester to spectacular costumes at the Notting Hill Carnival: *The Times* offers a guide to the top summer festivals. **Page 37**

Flower show: A new David Hockney exhibition opens with a theme that is exuberantly floral. "I chose it to cheer myself up," says the artist, 60 this year. **Page 38**

Bombay mba: At the Barbican Zubin Mehta conducted music by Indian composers with a Mahler symphony thrown in, to celebrate his country's 50 years of independence. **Page 38**

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FEATURES

Neck and neck: How unfortunate that the leaders of the two main parties should have plumped for such similar neck-wear. **Page 16**

Dress sense: "He's sort of medium, really." Buying clothes for a man is so much more stressful than shopping for a woman. **Page 16**

Bullied: Tanja Clayton has just won £200,000 as compensation for five years of bullying. What made her put up with it? **Page 17**

MEDIA

Braintwisted: Why does the BBC fail for National Brainwashing Week, as National Science Week should be known, asks Brenda Maddox. **Page 22**

Five life: Dawn Airey, the director of programmes for CS, tells of her diary on getting the channel on air by the end of the month. **Page 23**

PROPERTY

House-proud: The main parties tell of their housing plans. **Page 41**

THE PAPERS

Long delayed details of the Russian Government reshuffle suggest that President Yeltsin is serious about bringing in his A-team for economic reform. It could be the coalition that is needed to cut corruption and waste in the bureaucracy, the banking system, the monopolies and the social sector that is retarding growth. *Moscow Times*

Letters

Tax and spending: long-term residential care for the elderly; French policy in Africa. **Page 19**

COLUMNS

SIMON JENKINS

In 1995 Tony Blair flew to see Rupert Murdoch to audition as Prime Minister. The great man approved. Blessing was conferred. New Labour, old Commonwealth. **Page 18**

THE TIMES 2

INSIDE SECTION
2
TODAY



BUSINESS

Do the numbers add up in the jobless count?
PAGE 29



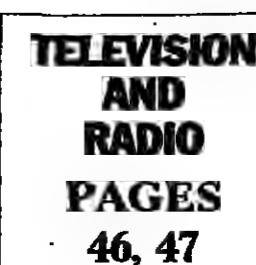
HOMES

The country cottage where John Major lived as a baby
PAGE 41



SPORT

Sweet revenge: the day Guscott broke loose
PAGES 43-48



WEDNESDAY MARCH 19 1997

Sink in kitchen sales takes shine off Limelight shares

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

LIMELIGHT, the kitchen company that came to the stock market in a controversial flotation last November, saw its shares plunge 25 per cent yesterday as it disclosed a dramatic fall in kitchen sales.

The shares, which had already fallen 17 per cent on Monday, ended the day down 35p at 107½p, against the flotation price of 175p.

Limelight said group sales in the first quarter of this year are down 11 per cent on a year earlier. The problems at Maben Kitchens were particularly bad, with sales down 32 per cent. In the same period last year, its sales rose 74 per cent.

Maben's weakness was partly offset by Kitchen Direct, whose sales rose 17 per cent. In 1995, Maben Kitchens and Kitchens Direct accounted for nearly 40 per cent

of group sales. Their combined total this year is down 24 per cent.

Limelight's kitchen was twice criticised by the BBC's *Watchdog* programme in December, and the company is taking legal action. Ashley Lewis, finance director, agreed that the programmes could have affected sales. "There could be a link," he said.

Sales of Dolphin fitted bathrooms, which share the same show-

rooms as Maben and which accounted for 18 per cent of sales in 1995, were down 11 per cent on last year. Sharps bedrooms and Portland conservatories are the only divisions trading satisfactorily.

The company ran into controversy last year over the role of Stephen Boler, former chairman and the company's creator. He resigned the chair before flotation and became a non-executive director. He sold the

bulk of his stake when the company came to the market, raising around £60 million to invest in an African safari park. He still holds 17 per cent. No new money was raised for Limelight in the float.

The company said yesterday that its forecast of operating profit before exceptional items of £16.5 million in the year to December 31 has been met. It will give more details with preliminary results on April 3.

Limelight may decide to bring its results announcement forward, but it is hampered by the absence of its chairman, Andrew Thomas, who is overseas. A spokesman noted that weakness in the fitted kitchen market had been highlighted by MFI. However, MFI recently reported like-for-like sales growth of more than 7 per cent.

Pennington, page 27

BG faces writedown of £5bn on assets

BY CARL MONTISHED

BG, which owns the British Gas pipeline network, could be facing a £5 billion writedown of its assets.

Expectations that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will adopt the Ofgas valuation of the Transco pipeline network mean that BG may be forced to consider whether there has been a permanent impairment of the economic value of Transco's assets.

Such a move could also have implications for the pipeline company's profits as accounting rules may not permit BG to cut its depreciation charge in line with the asset reduction.

The book value of the Transco assets is about £18 billion, recorded in BG's current cost accounts and filed at Companies House. But Ofgas has adopted a regulatory asset value for Transco of about £12.5 billion. The difference is at the heart of the dispute between BG and its regulator.

City analysts have been probing BG's management to find out what the company will do to its balance sheet if the MMC adopts the Ofgas regulatory asset value. The company is believed to be in talks with Price Waterhouse, its auditors, over the dilemma.

The problem is compounded because BG works on current cost accounting rather than historic cost and, in a period of low inflation, there are few comparatives for dealing with the notion of permanent asset impairment. BG will have to decide whether the economic value of the assets has been impaired and whether the change is permanent.

Even more serious for BG is the possibility that the company's reporting of profits may be affected by an asset writedown. Price Waterhouse is believed to have advised BG that it may not be able to reduce its depreciation charge in line with the reduction in

asset value. Under current cost accounting, it is thought the depreciation charge must reflect the real cost of sustaining the asset base.

The cost of sustaining Transco's 2,500 kms of pipelines and other facilities are at the hub of the dispute between Ofgas and BG. By reducing the value of the asset base, the regulator has disallowed a large portion of the amount set aside by BG in its accounts for renewing the assets. In so doing, Ofgas arrives at a lower regulated income for BG in its pricing formula.

The asset writedown alone is unlikely to disturb City analysts. Ordinarily, such a move would be followed by a profit upturn. Concerns about regulatory risk and windfall taxes have lead the stock market to value BG at a big discount to even the Ofgas asset price of £12.5 billion.

The market value of BG is currently about £7.5 billion or almost £12 billion including its debts. Analysts attribute a value of some £4 billion to BG's upstream and international businesses, suggesting a market worth for Transco of only £7.5 billion, well adrift of the regulatory value.

However, suggestions that the depreciation charge against profits will not be reduced has serious implications for BG's dividend. The company has already indicated that it will distribute all of Transco's profits.

BG's management have been battling on several fronts in their effort to win concessions from the regulator and now from the MMC. Alongside the question of asset valuation is operational cost. The City is expecting BG to win some extra income from the MMC, in the range of £100 million to £150 million in the form of an allowance for higher operating costs.

Tempus, page 28



Peter Kindersley, chairman and chief executive of Dorling Kindersley, which aims to sell more of its books through its door-to-door network

Borrowing within target and City expectations

BY JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR

PUBLIC borrowing looks set to

understand a Government's Budget forecast this year after another month of healthy tax receipts.

The public sector borrowing requirement totalled £3.6 billion in February, according to the Office for National Statistics.

This was lower than the City had been expecting and left cumulative borrowing in the first 11 months of the current financial year at £14.1 billion, against £22.2 billion at the same stage last year.

Even excluding privatisation proceeds, there has been a substantial improvement on last year. Ex privatisation, the cumulative PSBR in the 11 months of the financial year so far was £18.3 billion, compared with £24.5 billion in the previous year.

Most economists are now predicting a substantial undershoot of November's official prediction of a £26.4 billion PSBR for the full year, perhaps in the order of £2 billion to £3 billion.

Martin Brooks, of Goldman Sachs, said yesterday that the buoyancy of tax receipts also augurs well for a

continuing fall in the PSBR.

next year. He is predicting a PSBR in the 1997-98 financial year of £19 billion.

Central government cash receipts are up 7.4 per cent on the year, against the 5.7 per cent increase predicted in the Budget. All of the main revenue categories — income tax, corporation tax and VAT — are running above target.

However, Jonathan Loynes, of HSBC Markets, put yesterday's positive news into context, noting that, even if this year's PSBR were to total only

£23 billion, this would still be almost twice as large as was envisaged by the Government only two years ago.

"Hence we continue to believe that the next Government would be well advised to tighten fiscal policy at some point," he said.

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Hoskyns attack on EMU 'folly'

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

SIR JOHN HOSKYN, chairman of Burton Group, launched an attack yesterday on the single currency project which he said will cost business millions of pounds, whether or not Britain joins.

Speaking at the Retail Week and British Retail Consortium annual conference in London, he said: "That effort and expenditure will be at worst premature, at best - for this is my hope - wasted altogether. But one way or another, it will have to be spent and spent early."

Sir John is the latest in a series of businessmen to enter the debate on whether Britain should join a single currency. Niall Fitzgerald, chairman of Unilever, and Chris Haskins, chairman of Northern Foods, are among those who have urged early entry.

However, Sir John, head of the Prime Minister's policy unit in 1979-82, said supporters of monetary union are pursuing the creation of a single European federal state. "The eventual aim is to turn it into a new superpower to rival the United States, Japan and the new economies of the Far East."

The contribution to the debate from big business has been disappointing, he said. "Big business seems to have accepted, uncritically, the idea that EMU is a low-cost, low-risk device which will remove exchange rate risks inside Europe without any damaging side effects. That is a naive view."

Sir John added: "I think the single currency will happen in some form, but I hope I am wrong. The best we can hope for is a small core ... Whatever the final outcome, we can be pretty sure that the dream of the larger project will not be abandoned until it has done as much damage as it can do, to the greatest number of people ... I hope and pray that we stay out of this folly."

Audit office fears weakness in VAT system costs millions

BY ADAM JONES

A NATIONAL Audit Office (NAO) report today reveals weaknesses in VAT collection from large organisations that could be losing the Treasury millions each year.

Although the report was largely complimentary about Customs and Excise, which collects VAT, the NAO said that dozens of big organisations may not have been checked rigorously enough.

The report focused on large traders, bodies that pay an unusually large amount of

VAT, or are judged to have particularly complex accounts.

They are seen as a riskier source of revenue and, as value-added tax is a self-assessed tax, the liabilities they calculate are checked more closely than usual.

In 1996 Customs and Excise identified 1,500 large traders that contributed £11.4 billion, or 34 per cent of the total VAT collected in the UK.

The extra checks carried out by Customs and Excise revealed £300 million in additional monies owing. The

amount varies enormously from case to case, but the average additional VAT charge resulting from large trader checks is about £200,000.

However, in a sample of 652 traders with more than £50 million of VAT flowing through each of them a year, the NAO said that 40 should have been subject to the tougher checking regime but were not classified as large traders. It added that they may have received inadequate scrutiny.

The report said: "A number of initiatives are in development which will further improve the department's arrangements for large traders. Nevertheless, there are some ways in which these arrangements could be made more efficient and effective."

Customs and Excise is to conduct a "comprehensive" review of the 40 traders as part of a wider package of tweaks. It is also looking at differences in the way that local offices approach large trader checks.

The NAO report showed large variations in the amount

of resources used to carry out the audits. Collectors in north-west England put proportionately more resources into an average large-trader check than almost any other region.

In the North West, the monitoring of a typical local authority, a significant class of large trader, used almost four times as many resources as the same procedure in south-east England.

A Customs and Excise spokesman said: "We are undertaking a review of methods that are being used by local offices."

Wolseley wary on housing markets

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

WOLSELEY, the builder's merchant, yesterday sounded a cautious note about the UK housing market, which it says remains fragile, and about the US housing market, which it expects to slow down in the next six months.

The company also noted that the strength of sterling is likely to cost it around £4 million in the second half.

The group made a pre-tax profit of £124.3 million in the six months to January 31, up from £111 million a year ago.

First-half earnings were boosted by buoyant business conditions in the US, but the Austrian and French markets remained weak, and progress in the manufacturing division was hit by sterling's strength.

Richard Ireland, chairman, said that housing starts have slowed in the US recently. "It

is likely that the rate of growth will slow during the second half, since our companies experienced an upturn in the equivalent period last year," he said.

Wolseley will pay an interim dividend of 3.3p (3.1p) on July 31.

The company says that the UK housing market is reasonably buoyant in the South East, but patchy elsewhere, and the effects of a rise in housing starts are not likely to be felt until later in the year.

Consumers may be reluctant to increase expenditure to any great extent until after the election," the company said, adding: "Whilst the margin trends are improving, compared with the second half of last year, there are still substantial pressures throughout the supply chain."



John Young, Wolseley chief executive, yesterday

Societies Bill expected to pass test

BY ANNE ASHTHORPE

THE Building Societies Bill, which gives wider powers to the building societies, will go to the Lords today after an unopposed second reading in the Commons yesterday.

Some peers object to the haste with which the Bill is being rushed through Parliament in the dying days of the

Government. They argue that this speed leaves too little time for debate.

However, Treasury sources now expect no obstacles to the Bill passing into law, as it has the support of Labour and, in particular, the support of Mike O'Brien, the Shadow Economic Secretary.

If all goes according to plan in the Lords, the Bill should

return to the Commons for its final stages tomorrow.

Some of the societies that are becoming banks this year have been fiercely opposed to the Bill. At present, societies that join the stock market can rely on a five-year period of protection from takeover. Under the terms of the Bill, this protective shield will be lost if the society makes a bid

for another financial services business. Those societies wedded to their traditional mutual status have supported the Bill, as it will allow them to compete more directly with banks and diversify into new areas. Currently, a society can only have an agency in a rural post office. If the bill is passed, the society will be able to operate the post office.

Pennington, page 27

Banks agree code on 'rescue culture'

BY ROBERT MILLER, BANKING CORRESPONDENT

MORE than three million small businesses, sole traders and partnerships are to be protected by a new binding code of conduct unveiled by the high street clearing banks.

The British Bankers' Association (BBA) yesterday announced that its members, including NatWest, Barclays, Lloyds, TSB, Midland and Royal Bank of Scotland, have agreed to a 12-point code, which comes into force on July 1 and is designed to cover how banks work with smaller businesses in difficulties.

Those who come under the protection of the voluntary plan will have an annual

turnover lower than £1 million, which covers 96 per cent of the 3.6 million registered companies and partnerships, and they are also eligible to take any complaints to the Banking Ombudsman.

Mike Young, the BBA executive responsible for the code, said: "This is a further step in the development of the rescue culture."

From July the banks have

promised to emphasise the

need for both sides "to get the

relationship right from the

start: the benefits of taking

early independent advice and

taking action when things go

wrong".

TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia S	2.11	1.95
Austria Sch	19.98	18.36
Belgium Fr	5.27	5.02
Canada S	2.26	2.12
Cyprus CypC	0.837	0.762
Denmark Kr	10.81	10.01
Finland Mkt	0.55	0.50
France Fr	9.45	8.80
Germany Dm	2.64	2.53
Iceland Kr	4.41	4.11
Hong Kong S	12.96	11.96
Iceland	120	100
Ireland P	1.07	0.99
Israel N	5.55	5.00
Italy Lira	2020	1945
Japan Yen	209.70	190.70
Lithuania Ltl	0.98	0.93
New Zealand \$	3.168	2.92
Norway Kr	11.41	10.61
Portugal Esc	281.00	252.50
Spain Pta	182.00	165.00
Spain Pta	238.00	222.00
Sweden Kr	12.91	12.11
Switzerland Fr	2.44	2.26
United Kingdom £	202.00	195.00
USA \$	1.083	1.038

Rates for small denominations bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.



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BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Delta sets sights on finding new markets

DELTA, the cables company, said yesterday that although its restructuring plans are progressing it would be concentrating on developing new markets, especially in Asia and Eastern Europe. With low gearing of 22 per cent it was well positioned to drive growth through acquisitions and organically, Jon Scott-Maxwell, the new chief executive, said.

Mr Scott-Maxwell's comments came as Delta revealed a 14 per cent fall in full-year pre-tax profits to £45.6 million. Turnover fell 7 per cent to £950 million. The total dividend is unchanged at 18.9p a share (14.4p final). Delta took an exceptional charge of £5 million to cover the rationalisation of its plumbing and circuit protection businesses, and a further charge of £6.6 million to cover the cost of loss on disposals.

BSG to sell dealership

BSG INTERNATIONAL, the car parts manufacturer and car dealership, is to separate its two core businesses by selling Bristol Street Companies, the car dealership, to a management buy-out team for £12 million. BSG will buy 20 per cent of the new equity in the buy-out company for £6 million. BSG, which will change its name to Britax International in May, reported pre-tax profits for 1996 of £19.28 million, down from £24.05 million a year earlier. A final dividend of 2.75p (2.5p), payable on July 1, will give a total of 3.52p (3.2p).

Meggitt back in black

MEGGITT, the engineering and aerospace group, returned to profit in 1996 after a major restructuring last year. Pre-tax profits were £24.3 million, compared with a loss of £21.5 million in 1995, when the group closed two business units and sold 12. Earnings per share were 7.3p in 1996, against a loss of 13.4p in 1995. The final dividend rises to 2.85p, from 2.63p, making 4.2p (3.93p). At the year end, order intake was 8 per cent up on the previous year. The order book for delivery in 1997 was 17 per cent higher than at the same time last year.

Wagon shares slide

SHARES in Wagon Industrial fell 20.2p to 286p yesterday as the engineering group announced a dividend cut and a £35 million bill to cover the cost of restructuring. Underlying profits for the year to March 1997 are expected to fall to about £20 million (£27 million). Wagon intends to pay a final dividend of 5p to make a total of 12p, a reduction from 19.8p. The shake-up at Wagon follows the appointment of David Kendall as chairman at the start of the year. The company said it intended to focus on engineering businesses with good growth prospects.

Heal's to raise £14.3m

HEAL'S, the furniture retailer, will have a market capitalisation of £21.3 million when it is floated on the stock market next week. The company is to raise £14.3 million from a placing of 6.73 million existing and 1.43 million new shares at 17.5p each. Dealings will begin on March 24. The flotation will provide £1.8 million for the company, while five directors will share £2.3 million. NatWest Ventures, which backed the 1990 management buyout, will claim the rest with the disposal of its entire shareholding. **Tempus, page 28**

Watmoughs disappoints

WATMOUGH'S, the printing company, announced disappointing results yesterday, saying conditions in the print media sector remain difficult after paper price increases. Pre-tax profits fell to £22.2 million, from £23.7 million in 1996. Earnings per share fell to 21.7p a share, from 23.8p. The total dividend is raised from 9.5p to 10.45p, with a final of 7.7p. Patrick Walker, the chairman, said: "The market for paper is much more stable and there is evidence of new launches and greater buoyancy from publishers."

Tempus, page 28

Card Clear expands

CARD CLEAR, the credit card verification group, is to expand into America with the \$10.5 million acquisition of a similar company there. Transaction Billing Resources (TBR), based in New Jersey, runs a "hot card" database used by payphone operators who check credit card transactions before connecting the call. TBR processes about 700,000 transactions a month and last year made profits of \$500,000 on sales of \$3 million. Shares of Card Clear rose 2p yesterday to a high of 47p on the Alternative Investment Market.

Irish Nationwide up

THE Irish Nationwide Building Society lifted annual pre-tax profits to just over £24 million from £22 million in 1995. The record growth in lending to £240 million reflects the continuing buoyancy of the Irish housing market. The society reported a 14 per cent increase in total assets to more than £1 billion, with a 12 per cent increase on reserves to £133 million. The society's cost to income ratio dropped last year to 32 per cent, from 34 per cent in the previous year.

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M Anthony Langdon
The Secretary

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26/3/97 150

□ Societies do well by doing good □ A minor victory for United Biscuits □ SFA makes a late leap for the bandwagon

□ "ONE-OFF, unrepeatable offer: Regular customers, just get to your local branch of J Sainsbury or Asda this weekend and load your trolley up with cash! No catches, no hidden extras! This offer is not available at branches of Tesco or Safeway."

Too good to be true, alas. Instead we have had to rely on our local building societies to outdo each other in displays of generosity to members of the public prepared to stick with them. Windfalls from the Halifax and the Woolwich in return for the freedom to convert to public status are one thing. This week two of that dwindling band with no ambitions to become banks or financial supermarkets are also claiming to be handing back £100 million to customers.

But the sweeteners on offer from the Yorkshire on Monday and the Bradford & Bingley today are an inspired example of making a virtue out of a necessity. For example, these and Nationwide's £200 million per year "customer benefits initiative", about half of profits, can be seen as the cost of dividends societies would have had to pay to shareholders, if they had any as public companies. Instead the money is paid to their effective shareholders, that is, members, as higher interest to lenders and lower mortgage rates.

This allows non-converting

societies to operate with a built-in pricing advantage. The supermarkets have loyalty cards, effectively delayed discounts of 1 per cent or so. That £200 million, or £45 million in the case of the Yorkshire and whatever from the B&B, means a mutual can on average cut mortgage rates by 0.35 per cent and raise the amount paid to lenders by the same degree, and still match the retained profits pulled in by one of the new banks.

Given this in-built advantage, customers should gradually migrate from the converters offering worse rates to the remaining mutuals. They should grow their 20 per cent share of the mortgage market at the expense of those newly converted banks with stock market quotes to service.

Except that this would suggest that the good guys might finish first, and that can never happen. So what can go wrong?

Customer inertia might prove so overpowering that the converters can continue to charge what they like. The latter's new shareholders might insist on action before market share is eroded, by cutting costs,

closing branches and behaving like any other bank, so allowing mutuals to begin to compete with the others from the mutuals.

Many of the 60 or so mutuals expected to survive might grow so lazy and so inept from their protected status, like lions at the zoo whose hunting instincts have become atrophied, that they can no longer be bothered to seek out market share.

They might turn out to be the Co-op rather than John Lewis, and scant competition for Sainsbury. A few years of managed decline, and a quiet implosion — and all we are left with is the big supermarkets and banks.

P-p-pass off a Penguin

□ YES, the big four supermarkets did change most of our lives for the better in the 1970s and 1980s. Now they control more than half of all food sales and are becoming as bad a bunch of overmighty subjects as top trade unions were before. And look what happened to them.

Hard-pressed United Biscuits

has won a minor victory against Asda. Archie Norman, Asda's self-promoting boss, developed a brand-beating Puffin chocolate biscuit with strangely similar packaging to UB's Penguin. UB

has won an injunction against the passing off, although nothing will happen pending appeal. UB's counsel noted drily: "There is no inherent connection between maritime birds and chocolate biscuits."

Asda said this was just a bit of fun and UB a humourless spoilsport. But nothing could be more deadly than the blatant use of monopoly power to override intellectual property rights. This lesson is one of the first that Western countries try to inculcate in former communist states.

Few manufacturers can afford to stand up in court to the big four, who can wipe their products from the shelves.

Coca-Cola challenged Sainsbury more than two years ago. The grocer finally changed its own-label cola can. The dispute spawned a code of conduct agreed between manufacturers and retailers requiring the latter to "avoid commercial plagiarism in packaging and trade dress".

This code appears to carry about as much authority as as the unions' social compact with Lord Callaghan, which ended up with the winter of discontent. Kellogg's complained bitterly over Asda's lookalike own-label cornflake packets.

Unilever, which spent millions developing and protecting the daffy named "I can't believe it's not butter", was not pleased by Asda's "You'd better believe it" spread. Grand Metropolitan, which spent much brawn developing a new market with its Malibu coconut liqueur, nearly choked on Asda's Windward.

Eighteen years after the winter of discontent, Labour abhors strikes. But the Tory candidate for Tunbridge Wells (not Taiwan) seems to think proper is there for the taking, or at least for the passing off.

One watchdog not having its day

□ WHEN a rogue trader runs amok, senior management should be brought to book by the relevant civil watchdog — if the latter is allowed to act unimpeded. When the Securities and Futures Authority said it could not proceed against Peter Tuckey over management failures at Barings, there was almost universal condemnation and the so-called "Tuckey gap" was born.

So the SFA tried to address this by putting the burden of proof on senior managers to demonstrate why they should not be held responsible for the failings of juniors.

The approach had already worked well for another regulator, Imra, in the Jardine Fleming case. At Morgan Grenfell even the threat of info action over Peter Young was enough for seven managers and super-

visors, and some very senior ones at that, to leave the firm.

But the decision by the Securities and Investments Board, yet another of this teaming band of regulators, to intervene in the debate looks suspiciously like a late bid to jump on the bandwagon. The SFA desperately needs to strengthen its rules, in particular to deal with the NatWest Markets incident. A delay for the chief watchdog to publish its mere thoughts on the matter, not even detailed rules, note, is helpful to nobody.

Our back pages

□ "WHAT is clear is that Mr Boler has become exceedingly wealthy while those who enter into deals with him tend to lose out," this column wrote on November 15, as Stephen Boler brought his LimeLight Group to the stock market and pocketed £60 million. "As he is selling shares, do you want to be buying them?" And oh, how the company complained. Investors who paid 175p for shares now worth 107p might ponder which of us was right. And NM Rothschild and Cazenove, respectively banker and broker, after one of the shortest gaps between prospectus and profits warning in corporate history might wonder how much longer they need decently stick around.

Charter silent as talk turns to Howden

By CARL MORRISSEY

CHARTER GROUP, the conglomerate that owns Esab, the Swedish welding equipment business, is considering acquisitions but is refusing to comment on speculation that it is sizing up Howden, the industrial filmmaker.

Profits at Charter fell from £103 million to £47 million owing to the exceptional loss on the sale of its 65 per cent stake in Cape, the building products group — after the write-back of goodwill previously written off the balance sheet. Operating profit from continuing businesses rose from £89 million to £92 million, with an 8 per cent gain in profits from Charter's rail track equipment business.

Charter is seeking to add a third division and could spend between £250 million and £500 million on acquiring a new business. Speculation that a bidder is pursuing Howden, capitalised at almost £280 million, centred on Charter but the company would not be drawn. At the year end, after the Cape disposal, Charter had no debt and cash resources of £35 million.

Tempus, page 28

Britannic Assurance plans Peps

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

BRITANNIC Assurance, the door-to-door life and pensions office, plans to diversify into lending and unit trust Peps.

Brian Shaw, chief executive, said that offering Peps would increase Britannic's presence among wealthier savers, and developing a credit business would benefit the bulk of its existing 1.2 million policyholders, who needed another source of borrowing because many had no bank account.

Britannic had a setback in its move into home insurance, in which policyholders fell slightly, to 170,000, last year.

Overall, new regular premiums rose by 7.7 per cent to £37.1 million, and new single premiums increased by 16.8 per cent, to £15.7 million.

Operating profit before tax rose 66 per cent, to £84.2 million, aided by a £23.2 million transfer after a settlement with the Government on "orphan assets". As part of this, the company is paying a 23p final dividend, making 28p.



CRT pays £23.8m for rival

By FRASER NELSON

CRT, the training and recruitment company, has become the lead player in computer staff contracting after buying IKPG, its rival, for £23.8 million. The deal was the first fruit of the £100 million cash injection that CRT gained last August by selling a controlling stake to a team of American businessmen.

Karl Chapman, chief executive, said: "We now have phenomenal ability to out-invest our competitors." With £75 million of the capital injection left over, he would be "disappointed" if CRT did not buy another company this year.

CRT is paying up to £16.9 million in cash, the balance in loan notes and paper. In the year to September 30, IKPG made underlying profits of £500,000 on sales of £45.1 million. It is expected to add about 40 per cent to CRT's business.

CRT's shares gained 3½ p to 255½ p yesterday.

Shake-up costs put Claremont into red

HIGHER than expected reorganisation costs meant Claremont Garments, a major clothing supplier to Marks & Spencer, dived £3 million into the red last year, the company revealed yesterday. (Sarah Cunningham writes).

The cost of closing its Glasgow factory and laying off 600 staff were £7.6 million against expectations of £6 million. Added running costs during the reorganisation took a further £2 million of profits, according to Peter Wiegand,

Cost savings from the reorganisation will not begin to appear until the second half of the current year.

The company is maintaining its final dividend at 5.25p, payable on July 1, for a full year 9.87p (9.65p).

The company's shares slid 17½ p to 152½ p.

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STOCK MARKET



MICHAEL CLARK

BG puzzles the pundits with a mystery 5p rise



Stuart Lyons celebrated a share rise of 3p for Royal Doulton

WHAT is going on at BG. Brokers in the Square Mile were asking themselves yesterday as shares in the now demerged British Gas defied a falling market to make a useful gain on the day.

By the close of business the price had shaken off recent nervousness to finish 5p better at 1731p, a healthy turnover that saw 17.5 million shares change hands.

The decision to demerge British Gas into two separate companies, BG and Centrica, was the brainchild of its accident-prone management. But the City has never fully shared the company's enthusiasm for the manoeuvre. Even so, the flurry of activity in the shares suggests that something is afoot and that some much-needed good news may be at last on the way for long-suffering shareholders.

Elsewhere, share prices continued to extend this week's losses, reflecting political uncertainty in the run-up to polling day on May 1. Fresh losses in bonds and the recent retreat by the pound on the foreign exchange.

The equity market managed to recoup half of its earlier losses, with the FT-SE 100 index closing 16.5 down at 4,356.8. It was 33.2 down at one stage. Total turnover reached 836 million shares, bolstered by a large number of bed and breakfast transactions to establish tax losses before the financial year end.

The weak pound is likely to be good news for British Steel, up 41p at 1384p, which was also benefiting from the proposed offer of DM435 million from Krupp-Hoesch for Thyssen, the rival steelmaker.

ICI lost more ground in the wake of Monday's profit downgrading by Kleinwort Benson, the broker, ending 15p lower at 761p after touching 766p.

The strong pound has also taken its toll on Dorling Kindersley, the publisher, to the tune of £1.5 million. In the first six months it cost the group £800,000. The share ended 3p lower at 270p. The strong currency is also causing problems for Servemes, 22p down at 3871p. Profits last year grew 30 per cent to £35 million.

BAT Industries closed 1p cheaper at 5171p after the latest victory in a Florida court for the anti-smoking lobby. But the group's success at imposing a 4 cents a packet

increase on cigarettes has been well received.

Shares of Fleitech tumbled 641p to 686p as brokers continued to reflect on this week's proposed link-ups with the BBC. The two have agreed to develop a number of new digital subscription channels. In a second joint venture they will acquire 65 per cent of UK Gold, currently owned by

BT shrugged off renewed worries about windfall taxes that would be imposed by a Labour Government, to finish 6p dearer at 442p or 43.4 million shares changed hands. It follows Monday's presentation for brokers to discuss prospects after the acquisition of MCI. The brokers came away bullish.

Fleitech, and develop the business. The Fleitech share price was also depressed by the sale of £7 million worth of shares in the company by Roger Luard, chief executive.

Royal Doulton, where Stuart Lyons is deputy chairman, achieved a solid increase in profits last year despite increased competitive markets in both Britain and the US. Profits at the fine china group

were up 15 per cent at £17.6 million. The shares rose 3p to 2891p.

English China Clays continues to reel from the poor reception given to this week's profits news with the price losing 71p at 200p. Kleinwort Benson is reckoned to have cut its forecast for the current year by £4 million to £65 million.

A price war appears to have

broken out among the music retailers with the likes of Tesco, down 31p at 3331p, and Safeway, up 4p at 345p, reported to be adopting an aggressive price-cutting policy on CD albums. EMi Group dropped 15p to 111.65 and W H Smith was 19p lower at 4591p.

British Vita was 1p lighter at 2061p. Earlier this week Bob McGee, chairman, paid

61p better than last year to 1661p after announcing plans to pay a special dividend of 5p.

■ **GILT-EDGED:** The London bond market continued to lose ground, but outperformed most of its overseas rivals. Brokers reported a flattening of the yield curve as losses among shorter dated issues matched the longer dated stocks.

The Bank of England plans to auction a further £2.5 billion of Treasury 7s per cent next Wednesday.

The June series of the long gilt ended seven ticks lower at £102.32, as a total of 63,000 contracts were completed.

Treasury 8 per cent 2015 shed four ticks at £103.83 as Treasury 8 per cent 2000, which closed at £103.34.

■ **NEW YORK:** Interest rates remained foremost on the minds of investors and shares were subdued. By mid-day the Dow Jones industrial average was 15.48 points lower at 6,940.00.

Wilson Connolly finished 61p better at 1661p after a new contract to print a section of *The Sunday Times*, profits are disappointing and well below historic levels. It now looks likely that these levels will remain unattractive in the future. The newspaper industry has changed beyond recognition since Watmoughs started life in 1888 printing a journal on rabbit breeding.

Watmoughs was protected from the rougher climate as long as times were good. But when advertising rates were squeezed during the 1990-92

recession and input prices

rose, the company felt the full brunt of cost-cutting.

The Watmoughs board

should also be concerned over the growth of electronic media. While the British public will continue to read newspapers well into the next century, there must be a fear readership will continue its long-term decline. So far post-war readership of national newspapers has held up around 14 million. This is partly due to newspaper price cuts, which need to be

financed with cost savings. Bad news for Watmoughs.

TEMPUS

Discord in the pipeline

IT WILL surprise no one that accountants are getting into a tizzy about BG's assets. Ofgas, the company and the stock market cannot agree on a value and there is every possibility that the MMC will come up with another figure, probably different from the one it blessed four years ago.

The well-rehearsed argument between Ofgas and BG over the value of its pipeline network was about depreciation — Ofgas believed that BG was providing too much in its accounts for the replacement of the installed base. It should work on a pay as you go basis and therefore when bills are low, it needs less income to service the network.

In the Platonic world of utilities regulation, the regulator fixes a price so that the net present value of the cash flow equals the regulatory value of the business; that in turn

should equal the market value, in this perfect world. Unfortunately the market is ignoring both the £18 billion book value of Transco and the Ofgas regulatory value of £12.5 billion. The market says that BG, plus its debt, is worth about £11.5 billion. Deduct about £4 billion for exploration and the Global Gas business and the pipeline network is worth £7.5 billion, a discount of almost 40 per cent from the Ofgas price.

If the market is wrong, BG is a screaming buy at these levels. The other alternative is that Ofgas is wrong and the market is pricing in the risk that BG will never be able to meet the Ofgas assumption on cost reduction. Either way, there is now a risk that the market will be further upset by a huge asset write-down and maintained depreciation charge. Sid will not be amused.

Charter

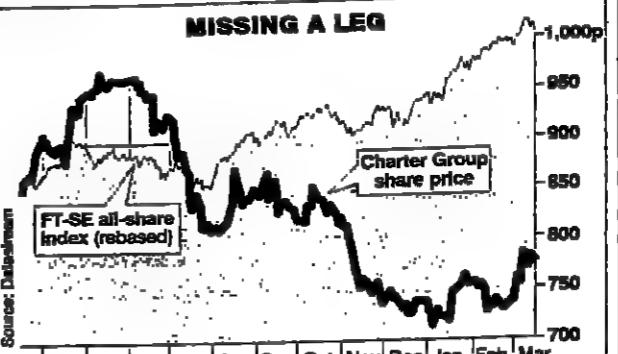
THE question for Charter Group is not: what if it launches a bid, but, rather, what if it fails to launch a bid? The stock market has factored a bid into the share price, a discount almost encouraged by Charter's management who are keen to whisper about a mysterious "third leg" to all and sundry. The rough and tumble of an aggressive takeover — Howden is the favourite target among those who peddle rumours — will be a new game for Charter. Its last bid, for Esab, was almost seven up at the start.

Charter needs a new business to get its earnings growth back into double digits. Esab, the Swedish welding equipment company, is a strong performer, earning double-digit margins, but sales growth is likely to be

slow until Esab gains a strong position in Asia. Revenue rose only 3 per cent last year in Europe; Esab is unlikely to gain much ground in Germany and France where it is fighting the market leader.

That does not detract from Charter's strength. Double-digit margins and a return on capital of 18 per cent

should be the envy of any equipment maker. The trouble is that Charter is being valued as if it were a weaker beast. Its market value, less cash, is less than five times its earnings before interest, tax and depreciation. Failure to get a target in its sights could well leave Charter looking down the other end of the barrel.



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The Watmoughs board should also be concerned over the growth of electronic media. While the British public will continue to read newspapers well into the next century, there must be a fear readership will continue its long-term decline. So far post-war readership of national newspapers has held up around 14 million. This is partly due to newspaper price cuts, which need to be

financed with cost savings. Bad news for Watmoughs.

Heal's

HEAL'S stores are fine places to walk around. They stock good-quality, expensive, well-designed furniture and a reasonable range of kitchen knick-knacks.

Watmoughs was protected from the rougher climate as long as times were good. But when advertising rates were squeezed during the 1990-92 recession and input prices

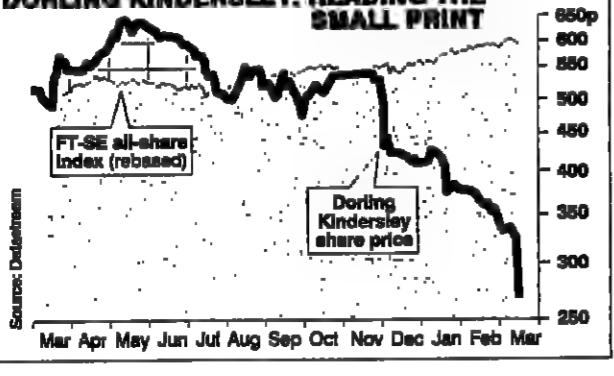
were at the price of a bird's eye maple coffee table.

Heal's is timing its flotation well. More people are moving house, interest rates are low and consumer confidence is growing. Many retailers — jewellers, for example — have noted a tendency for consumers to move upmarket. But come a downturn, furniture spending will be cut and homeowners now fondly dreaming of a Heal's sofa will slope off to Ikea.

The successful flotation of Harvey Nichols last year has given confidence to small but high-profile retailers. But the extent to which conditions are now in their favour

should not be underestimated. The price of 175p per share, giving a historic price-earnings ratio of 17.4 times, is not greedy. But the placing of Heal's shares will mean that they will be tightly held and illiquid. This is not the stock for a punt on the retail sector.

EDITED BY CARL MORTISHED



Closing Prices Page 31

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Leslau chases screen dream

IT HAS been a busy week for Nick Leslau. Only 24 hours after announcing his decision to take Noddy to America, the chief executive of Trocadero yesterday staked his claim to open Europe's first Pepsi IMAX 3D cinema. Towering five storeys high and spanning the width of an Olympic swimming pool, the £6 million state-of-the-art cinema is to be housed in the Piccadilly leisure complex.

In the crossfire

ROGER BOOTLE came under fire at Bloomberg's bunt to discuss the proposition: "New Labour, New Government". Sandwiched between William Waldegrave, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and Labour counterpart Alastair Darling, HSBC's chief economist was clearly caught in the middle. A bearded Darling sniped at Bootle, who was acting as compere: "You're doing your Liberal role-playing, just like Paddy." Waldegrave retorted: "No, he's not at all like Paddy, he's very sensible." Ouch.

Smouha reward

WHO better to keep an eye on finances at The World Bank than Brian Smouha? As a reward for taking on two of the most sensational banking scandals in recent history — Banco Ambrosiano and BCCI — the Deloitte & Touche partner is to become lead auditor to the Bank. One major plus for Smouha, who recovered some 90 per cent of Ambrosiano's assets, is that he can resign as the Luxembourg liquidator to BCCI. He also gets to relocate to Washington. Virtue, as they say...



£30 off our electric bill — how much will that be in windfall tax?

Bookies buzzing

BOOKMAKERS flew into a spin after the news that *The Sun* is back. Blair-Ladbrokes moved the number of seats Labour will win from 364-370 to 372-378. Meanwhile, City Index has upgraded the number of seats predicted to be won by Labour from 365-371 to 373-379. Punters appear to have a different view, however. Since the opening of trade yesterday morning, they were busy buying the Tories (predicting more than 238 seats) and selling Labour (predicting less than 375 seats).

INSPIRED by Marjorie Scardino's mission statement on Monday, Dennis Stevenson has upped his stake in Pearson. The incoming chairman of the media and leisure group bought another 30,000 shares, adding to the first tranche he bought from former managing director Frank Barlow.

Viscount Lords it

TONY BLAIR's economics spokesman stepped into Lord Marsh's shoes yesterday as chairman of Lopex. Viscount Tom Chandos, a former corporate finance director at Kleinwort Benson and executive director of Batts & Company, will take over from Lord Marsh, the former Cabinet Minister in Harold Wilson's administration and chairman of British Rail, who now sits as a cross-bencher in the Lords.

MORAG PRESTON

Seek and you will find truth on jobs is hard to work out

Philip Bassett surveys the battle lines drawn in the dispute over how to count unemployment



Official figures have reported unprecedented numbers getting on their bikes

the second largest for 25 years, at 67,800. "We thought we might get one month's hit," acknowledges one senior Whitehall figure. "We didn't think we'd get this."

The sheer scale of the fall — the drop from October onwards is the same as the total fall for the previous year and a half combined — is marking business and the City as suspicious, let alone the Government's political opponents. More than a quarter of a million people have come off the count since October.

Sudhir Jumani, associate director for economic analysis at the Confederation of British Industry, says: "We have to take these figures with a very large pinch of salt."

Bank of England officials agree. The Bank's last inflation report was sceptical, suggesting that even the not-yet fully comparable unemployment figures from the Government's quarterly *Labour Force Survey* "implies that the labour market did not tighten as quickly in autumn 1996 as the fall in the administrative claimant count indicates", citing particularly a JSA effect. So what is it? What has been, and is being, the effect of the introduction of JSA on unemployment in Britain?

After an average fall in the jobless of 19,300 over the previous six months, the drop in October was 45,600. November witnessed the biggest fall in unemployment for a quarter of a century, when the count fell by a massive 95,400. December's drop was a large 46,700, while last month's was

ain't? Inevitably, there are a number of answers, and these are complicated by an inter-departmental row in Whitehall that means the Government having, in effect, two answers. The main views are: □ Statisticians: JSA has one key effect on the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the

ed by this, mainly because the ONS has suspended its estimate of the monthly trend in unemployment, depriving ministers of what might have been a potent weapon in the election campaign. Ministers would like their unemployment ball back — to kick it at the opposition.

ONS officials try to disentangle the impact of JSA into three elements.

The first relates to changed office procedures — the time benefit office staff are taking to assess and process claims, given an unfamiliar benefit, and the conversion to a new computer system to process JSA claims. They estimate that the flow on to the jobless count has therefore been lower than would otherwise have been the case, depressing the count by up to 8,000, but they believe these effects will be temporary, as the system beds in.

Secondly, they believe a shift to earlier means testing is having an effect on the stock of unemployment. Including a likely 5,000 reduction in today's figure, ONS officials believe that the total impact of this element has been to reduce the claimant count by about 15,000. Thirdly, they cite what are called "behavioural" effects, deter-



JSA has clearly affected the jobless figures?

Government's statistics-collecting and producing arm: it makes it nervous. Battled by the political disputes over unemployment figures, the ONS has sought to determine the JSA effect, and where it can't, to say so. Ministers have been irritated

ring people from making fraudulent claims, in the way the Government's Project Work "workfare" pilot scheme has done.

The Government yesterday strongly supported Project Work in evidence to the Commons' all-party Employment Select Committee. They may also include the impact of a reduction in postal signing for benefit, and further fraud measures, such as the Benefit Agency's Fraud Hotline, through which benefit cheats are stopped.

ONS officials cannot estimate the impact on the claimant count of these possible effects.

□ Ministers and other Whitehall officials. All this is a bit too cautious for some ministers, who fear they cannot claim the political prize of a rapid fall in unemployment. They insist that whatever the precise statistical impact of JSA, the trend in the fall in unemployment is now decisively different.

Instead of the 15,000 to

20,000 estimate put forward by the ONS, and suspended

since last autumn, ministers in other departments and their officials believe unemployment is now dropping by up to

30,000 a month. Whitehall

departments other than the

ONS have been carrying out

their own analysis of the effect

of JSA since last month's

unemployment drop, and

their best estimate is that

roughly about half the current

drop is due to the new benefit

and half due to improvements

in the labour market.

□ Independent employment analysts: Job pressure groups take a more sceptical view of the JSA effect. John Philip, director of the Employment Policy Institute, says the figures "have obviously been affected by the revolution in the benefit regime following the introduction of the JSA".

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not exclusion, but a Commission report on the medium-term outlook. Note that it may also report on those who do qualify "if it is of the opinion that there is a risk of an excessive deficit" — a clear threat to the Club Med countries, which have stormed up the field from nowhere. In theory, this clause could also threaten the likes of France, which qualify through fiscal fudge.

But is this likely? The Treaty sets numbers as targets, but makes the Commission jury, and one cannot imagine the Commission showing a red card to the biggest core members of the EC.

The only real political threat to the launch is the qualified majority vote that will give the final verdict. If the Club Med countries are barred, they may have to be bought off — at least with promises.

These will be forthcoming. A more distant threat is the emerging opposition to the whole Maastricht project in countries that were once solid supporters. Opponents include, potentially, the German Social Democrats, and a new French party.

Wishful again. An optimistic forecast can still be right. German near-term growth prospects depend almost entirely on how quickly that economy responds to devaluation; and since Germany has not devalued within living memory (unless you count the dollar bubble in the early 1980s), that is a matter of pure guesswork. Germany could still qualify, at least on the borrowing test. And does strict compliance with the numbers really matter? The Chancellor may like to proclaim that "three means three"; but he is talking about keeping Italy out of EMU, not letting Germany in. The Treaty is fuzzier.

Trouble, he says, could emerge not slowly, through regional decline, but suddenly, and in the bond markets.

National debts, he says in the current issue of *Prospect*, will no longer be the sovereign debt the market knows — bonds subject to exchange-rate risk, but backed by the power to print money.

They will carry solvency risk, like Liverpool Docks and Harbour, or New York City. Or, say, Belgium?

But can they really

gather enough support at this late hour to block the launch? Wishful thinking may say yes, but reason says no. EMU still looks an odds-on bet to start on time, though with a skeleton crew for its trials.

And what about those trials? Conventional wisdom and the market say that with a hand-picked crew, nothing can go wrong. Charles Goodhart, financial markets guru at the LSE and former

voice of reality at the Bank of England, begs to differ.

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Making a case for letting sleeping watchdogs lie

Christine Buckley on how MPs viewed the regulatory industry



Spottiswoode: endorsement

Littlechild: bolstered

itor, could prove a welcome add-on to RPI-X.

A number of companies have opted to offer consumer rebates and voluntary price-cutting. But the problem with voluntary arrangements is that they are ad hoc and at the company's discretion. The water regulator has already experienced intransigence from one company.

An alternative way of curbing profits is to set a rate of return that the company is permitted to achieve on its assets. This form of regulation operates in the United States and is less incentive-oriented than RPI-X, which works to encourage cost savings and productivity increases at the expense of longer-term investment planning.

One area where the select committee has shown more teeth in its recommendations involves the power that regulators have over their industries. It urges an inquiry to discover whether Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, needs more powers to get to grips with the much-criticised electricity pool. The pool — the marketplace for power — and the issue of competition in power-generation have long been bone of contention among large users and region-

al electricity companies. After the last select committee report into energy regulation recommended scrutiny of generators' margins and costs, Professor Littlechild moved ahead with his divestment plans. He may well respond again to this fresh bolstering of the concerns over the extent of competition in generation.

Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, will also be thankful for what amounts to a ringing endorsement of her battles to make public more information about Transco, British Gas's pipeline network. The committee recommends that information regarding a natural monopoly should be assumed to be non-confidential unless otherwise stipulated. On this point early legislation is urged as an acknowledgment of the conflict between regulator and regulated over information.

The committee has further recommended that the Government should check on regulators' budgets to ensure they have something with which to combat the financial might of the regulated businesses.

When the Labour Party has stopped waving the report as backing for its windfall tax, its own trade and industry team must decide whether to endorse the report's tinkering approach or go for a more radical reform of regulation. If Labour forms the next government the renewal date for all the utilities' price controls will come up in 2000, two years ahead of another general election. If it does nothing to the regulatory process it must hope that, by then, controversy and condemnation have indeed been overtaken by the level of satisfaction that the trade and industry select committee anticipates.

CIRCUIT PROTECTION

INDUSTRIAL SERVICES

DELTA

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Building on operational strengths, we intend to realise our potential by focusing resources on higher added value products and markets with higher growth opportunities.

	1996	1995
	£m	£m
Turnover	950.0	1018.5
Profit before interest	55.5	63.4
Profit before tax	45.6	53.1
Earnings per share	15.2p	20.0p
Dividends per share	18.9p*	18.9p*

*Final dividend to be paid as a Foreign Income Dividend (FID).

Copies of the Annual Report & Accounts for the year ended 28th December 1996, from which the above is an extract, are available from 4th April from the Secretary, Delta plc, 1 Kingsway, London WC2B 6XG. Telephone 0171-836 3535.

CABLES

Cowie bus takeover endorsed

The Government has backed the Monopolies and Mergers Commission conclusion that the £300 million takeover by transport group Cowie of its rival British Bus was not against the public interest.

John Taylor, Minister for Corporate and Consumer Affairs, agreed with the MMC that, nationally, the takeover could mean more competition, not less. He said London's bus market was regulated enough to guarantee competition, even though Cowie is the capital's biggest private operator. Cowie now controls more than a quarter of all London's buses.

Pathfinder aim

Pathfinder Properties, which owns and rents out housing in London, plans to join the Alternative Investment Market next week. Andrew de Candole, chairman, has put up £750,000 to buy out shareholders who hold stakes through the Business Enterprise Scheme. The company, expected to be capitalised at £1.4 million, will concentrate on home conversions from commercial property. It has already bought a former telephone exchange in Wimbledon, south London, which it plans to turn into 104 apartments.

BT link-up

British Telecommunications will increase its operations in Japan through a joint venture next month with Marubeni Corporation. The Japanese telecoms business, that will aim to increase the business by offering direct access to global services. BT will have a 51 per cent stake. Marubeni 31 per cent and minority shareholders the rest.

Secure future

Secure Trust, the financial services company, is paying a final dividend of 14p, making the total 20p (18p). Secure's pre-tax profits for 1996 edged higher to £9.4 million. Income from its bill-paying service for consumers rose 10 per cent.



Ian Black, managing director of Wilson Connolly, left. David Lawther, finance director, centre, and Lynn Wilson, chairman

Sterling threatens Glynwed's 'first real growth this decade'

By OLIVER AUGUST

GLYNWED International, the engineering group, is benefiting from the strength of the housing market, which has offset the cost of the rise in sterling. The growing number of people moving into new homes has boosted sales of consumer durables.

Volume growth at Glynwed's consumer durables unit reached 15 per cent last

year after declining for seven years. A spokesman said: "This is the first real growth we have seen this decade."

Glynwed is market leader in the leisure cooker market and has seen sales of gas and electric cookers increase across the board. The spokesman said: "Once house sales get under way this pulls through in the consumer durables sector."

But the group gave warning

that export growth was under threat from exchange rate shifts, with the strong pound likely to have a significant effect not only on its operations, but on the UK economy as a whole.

Glynwed is highly exposed to European currency shifts. Of its £150 million worth of exports, £90 million is destined for Europe. It maintains, however, that the rising pound would not necessarily

help its European competitors. A spokesman said the competitors may prefer to raise their prices in order to restore margins squeezed after sterling's free fall after Black Wednesday in 1992.

Nevertheless, Glynwed expects the negative impact of the rising pound on its results to grow in 1997 despite being hedged in the currency markets. In the calendar year 1996, the group's pre-tax profit

increased slightly from £84.9 million to £86.4 million. But profits were cut back to £70 million by one-off provisions of £16.3 million. Earnings per share fell to 18p from 25.75p. The dividend was maintained at 12.75p, with the final payment of 8.35p to be made on June 6.

The exceptional charges mainly resulted from provisions totalling £12.5 million for the disposal of Wednesbury Tube, its copper business. The sale was finalised on February 28 and further disposals of non-core units are expected. The group has not made any further provisions so far. At the same time it said it was also looking for "strategic buys".

A further factor limiting profitability during 1996 was the slump in metal prices.

Between mid-1995 and mid-1996, prices fell by almost 40 per cent. The spokesman said:

"This fall hurt profits in our metals distribution division.

However, the division is still comfortably profitable."

The product monitoring division, which made £2.2 million (£3.2 million), is expected to grow slowly but will benefit from cost-cutting. The environmental arm, which saw profit recover to £2.2 million (£1.2 million), may receive a boost from new US legislation.

A final dividend of 3.9p, due on May 27, will maintain the total at 6.6p.

Graseby seeks healthcare growth

By PAUL DURMAN

GRASEBY, the electronic instruments group increasingly concentrating on drug infusion, is in the market for more healthcare acquisitions.

The company expects to clear its £5.4 million of borrowings through the sale of two small businesses that make infra-red sensors and industrial controls. Paul Lester, Graseby chief executive, is

likely to expand the medical division's range of pumps and bags, but would also be interested in closely related areas.

Graseby reported annual pre-tax profits up from £6 million to £10.5 million, its best results for five years. The medical division, strengthened by the 3MIT business bought last July, contributed higher profits of £5 million

(£4.2 million) despite weak demand from the National Health Service.

The technology division, which includes Graseby's chemical weapons monitor, increased profits to £3.2 million (£1.4 million). Having recently won £50 million of contracts from the US and Swiss governments, Mr Lester said the group is now bidding

for a \$400 million contract from the US defence department.

The contract, to replace existing monitors with smaller ones, will require Graseby to find a US partner.

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Swire Pacific

"The Swire Pacific Group is in a strong position and the outlook for the Group as a whole is good."

P D A Sutch
Chairman, Swire Pacific Limited
Hong Kong, 14th March 1997

HIGHLIGHTS

Profit attributable to shareholders	US\$981M	+19%
Investment property portfolio	US\$11,595M	+41%
Net assets per share	US\$8.15	+41%
Earnings per share	US\$61.9	+19%
Dividends per share	US\$22.7	+11%

Notes:

1. Amounts per share refer to 'A' shares. Entitlements of 'B' shareholders are in proportion 1 to 5 compared with those of 'A' shareholders.
2. All the above figures have been translated from Hong Kong dollars into United States dollars at an exchange rate of US\$1 = HK\$7.80.
3. Dividends are declared in Hong Kong dollars.

1996/97	High	Low	Company	Price	Up	Yield	%	PE
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES								
495 497 Allied Domecq	221	19	94	11.0				
496 498 Amstel	224	20	92	12.2				
499 500 Amstel	224	20	92	12.2				
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This is a great opening to join a growing company supporting two young managers. Your day will be varied and busy, producing presentations and reports, arranging travel and accommodation. This organisation will give masses of opportunity to someone who has the ability to be proactive and use their own initiative. Skills: 50wpm/ Windows/ Excel Age: 20-30. Please call Sam Garner on 0171 390 7000

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1st or 2nd job? The opportunity has arisen for someone with an interest in the World of Interiors to work as Secretary/Receptionist within this very prestigious and well-connected company based in SW3. Using your finely tuned office skills you will be meeting Interior Designers and their Clients, putting together quotes and correspondence, arranging flowers, couriers - anything! An excellent training ground to learn about small but expanding business. *40 + Windows. Age 20-25.

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This is a one-off opportunity for a recent graduate with secretarial skills to gain experience with a small but leading City fund management firm. Based in fantastic offices, you will be initially based on reception gaining full time exposure to all clients and situations and then developing your role taking on more involved duties and progressing within the company depending on available opportunities. Age: 21-26. Skills: 45wpm typing/strong IT skills. Please call Claire Ashley on 0171 390 7000.

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TRUE GRADUATE ASSISTANT £18,000

UK President of High-Growth International Media Corporation needs highly motivated Assistant/ Project Co-ordinator intent on a career in Media. He offers 100% involvement - you could be attending meetings, researching into major projects, policy formulating - as part of a much wider, global Organisation. An interest in the Far East/Asia useful, must have keyboard skills and be computer literate. Age 22-25.

Moving On Up £18-20K + Fab Bens West End

Large international firm of management consultants seek senior secretarial assistants to join their dynamic team. You will have good knowledge of Windows, combined with a strong sense of team responsibility as well as a real eye for detail and boundless enthusiasm. The job content is interesting and diverse with the opportunity to become totally involved. A minimum of 5 GCSE's at C grade and the attitude to succeed are the key. Please contact Susanna Hargreaves on 0171 434 4512.

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CHELSEA COMMUTING! £18- £20,000

End all that hassle with crowds, tubes, buses etc, and come to work in the fresh leafy streets of Chelsea and Kensington amongst their attractive houses and in their calm village atmospheres. This prestigious, privately owned Estate Agency in SW3 need a PA to organise their highly successful Head of Sales. Sense of humour and self-confidence essential! Aged 25-35. -60. No Audio.

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'Down-to-earth' - unusual for a successful PR company. If you are too and you enjoy frequent contact with blue chip clients, you're highly organised and well-educated, this is an excellent career move. It's not all glamour, of course - there's still typing, organising travel, diaries etc. Age to late 20s.

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£18-25 meg SW1

Our client is an influential international management consultancy, a member leader with the highest standards. They need 3 exceptional admin assistants - committed, computer literate team players with flexible, 'can-do' attitudes and deadly accurate 60wpm. How do you measure up?

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EXECUTIVE SELECTION! £23,000 + Bonus

A fabulous opportunity has arisen for a PA/Administrator with at least 2 years experience to join this Int'l, Blue Chip firm of Executive Selection Consultants. Based in W1 we will work alongside 2 successful and likable Consultants - manage their diaries, coordinate meetings, put together reports, correspondence, liaise in depth with clients and candidates - anticipate their needs and as a result get totally involved. -60. Windows + Powerpoint. Age 23-28. Low secretarial content!

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You should be an experienced Consultant with a proven track record and enjoy the buzz of handling a professional team of temps. (Initially maternity cover). Benefits include profit share, PPF, a lovely location and a dynamic, happy environment.

Please contact Hilary Watts in confidence to discuss.

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Help! Due to expansion we urgently need experienced Receptionists, Secretaries, PA's who would enjoy temping for our clients in the West End, Chelsea and the City. Without exception our Temporary Bookings are treated like Permanent Jobs - we get you work, but work where you feel you fit in, coupled with competitive rates of pay. For more information please ring Diana Anderson.

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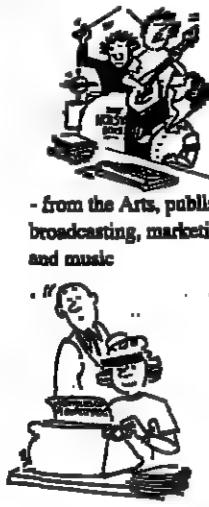
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£20,000 + Excellent Bens

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An impressive European Government Agency has a position for a Senior Secretary with at least three European languages. Fluent Portuguese and English essential as is 3 years+ experience with Word 4 Windows and 50wpm for this excellent opportunity starting immediately.

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Premieres and pop stars, carnivals and choruses: Gillian Maxey previews the best of the British festivals

Top festival delights of summer '97

JEREMY YOUNG

APRIL

Chichester Theatre: A starry line-up for the Festival Theatre's summer season: Ian McEwan, Stephen Beacham, Googie Withers, Maureen Lipman and the Hollywood actress Kathleen Turner. Plays include *The Admirable Crichton*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Our Betters*, and *Divorce Me Darling!*, Sandy Wilson's high-kicking sequel to *The Boyfriend*. April 15-Sept 27 (01243 781312)

MAY

Bath: Now in its 48th year, Classical, contemporary and jazz music, together with modern art, explore the theme "Resurrection". The Contemporary Music Weekend, with trail-blazing composer Iannis Xenakis, is an exciting addition, and the Clerical Medical Jazz Weekend makes a welcome return. Highlights include the Opening Night celebrations, Sir Simon Rattle, James Galway, Emma Kirkby, Steven Isserlis and an extensive Fringe festival. May 16-June 1 (01225 463362)

Beverley and East Riding: Early music binge celebrates its tenth anniversary and new name with a musical journey through medieval North Africa, Renaissance Europe and 16th-century London. The Gabrieli Consort and Fretwork lead the way. May 1-11 (01482 884354)

BOC Covent Garden, London: Two weeks of opera and music theatre in the cultural heart of London embraces the contrasting themes of "Venetian Splendour" and "American Piazza". Highlights include British Youth Opera's new production of *The Condottieri*, the San Francisco music revue *Beach Blanket Babylon*, and Stephen Sondheim's cult musical, *Anyone Can Whistle*. May 26-June 7 (0171 312 9922)

Brighton: Colourful international festival encompassing the anniversaries of Schubert and Brahms. Premieres include *Danton's Tod*, Gottfried von Einem's French Revolution opera, Joshua Sobol's *The Village*, and *Waikana* by Maori playwright Hone Kouka. Contem-



Schubert feted in Sheffield, Brighton and Malvern

porary and classical music, dance, literature and debate, films and exhibitions run concurrently with a programme of street theatre. May 3-25 (0123 676926)

Bury St Edmunds: Seventeen days *en fête* in the historic market town. Highlights include a Michael Tippett UK premiere, the world premiere of *The Rosewell Incident* by Music Theatre Wales, drama from Methane and Madness and jazz from Circa Bley. Also, poetry, films, dance street theatre, comedy and a Viennese firework finale. May 9-25 (01284 759505)

Chelmsford Cathedral: Chamber, choral and keyboard music, sandwiched between orchestral concerts by the Britten Sinfonia and Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Other highlights include a production of *Warchild* by National Youth Music Theatre, jazz from John Dankworth and Cleo Laine, and a fringe programme of talks, film, poetry and drama. May 7-17 (01245 359890)

Glasgow Mayfest: Citywide celebration of the arts, including music, dance, theatre, comedy, visual arts, film, magic and storytelling. Opera: Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' controversial *Resurrection*. Dance: UK premieres from Compania Antonio Gades and Les Ballets Africains. Theatre: Hector Macmillan's new play; *A Greater Tomorrow* about Scots who fought in the Spanish Civil War. May 1-24 (0141 552 8444)

Gloucester: Six operas, 74 performances. New productions of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (directed by Graham Vick, conducted by



Basking below the battlements: the casual fun of the vast Edinburgh Fringe — the world's biggest cultural jamboree — has spawned imitations around the country

John Eliot Gardiner in his Glyndebourne debut and Rossini's comic opera, *Le Comte Ory* (directed by Jérôme Savary). Revivals of Britten's *Owen Wingrave*, Mozart's *Helena* (directed by David Fielding), Haydn's *Le Pescarci* (directed by Robert David MacDonald) and Mozart's *Costa Jan tutte* (directed by Ian Judge). June 9-July 6 (01865 361636)

Leeds: Music, mostly jazz, inspired by the roots and rhythms of New Orleans, Africa, South America, Russia, Germany, the West Indies and the mystery of the Far East. May 7-11 (0113 243 2491)

Malvern: Elgar in the Malvern Hills plus Schubert and Brahms. Concerts by resident musician Tasmin Little, the Chillingian Quartet with Raphael Wallfisch, and the New Queen's Hall Orchestra. May 30-June 7 (01684 572725)

Newbury: A fortnight of festive entertainment. Percussionist Evelyn Glennie, cellist Julian Lloyd Webber, mezzo-soprano Sarah Walker, guitarist Julian Bream, jazz from Humphrey Lyttelton. May 10-24 (01635 33421)

Perth: Festival amid breathtaking scenery, including French chamber music with pianist Pascal Rogé, Quatuor Parissi and London Winds. Artists include the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra and Helen Shapiro, while the film festival looks at "Scotland on the Silver Screen". May 23-June 1 (01738 472706)

Sheffield: The Lindsays and friends explore Schubert and Brahms at this year's Music in the Round May Festival. May 10-24 (0141 276 9922)

JUNE

Aldeburgh: Founded by Britten, the Suffolk festival celebrates its half-century with two premieres by Mark-Anthony Turnage: the music theatre piece, *The Country of the Blind*, based on a story by H.G. Wells, and *Twice*. *Twice*, a 30-minute dramatic scene with mezzo-soprano Sally Burgess. All three of Britten's Church Parables are performed on the same day, and Tabita Zimmermann gives the world premieres of Alexander Goehr's Violin Concerto and Britten's 1932 Double Concerto for Violin and Viola. June 13-27 (01728 453433)

City of London: St Mary-le-Bow's bells will ring out at the start of three weeks of opera, concerts, recitals, jazz, literary events, film and walks in the Square Mile. Highlights include a unique centenary dramatisation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one hundred years of *Dracula* on film, choral concerts commemorating the tercentenary of St Paul's Cathedral, and the world premiere of Bernstein's *The White House Cantata*. June 19-July 10 (0171 377 0540)

Garsington: Operas on the terrace of the Jacobean manor, including the first British performance of Richard Strauss's *Die Ägyptische Helena* (directed by David Fielding), Haydn's *Le Pescarci* (directed by Robert David MacDonald) and Mozart's *Costa Jan tutte* (directed by Ian Judge). June 9-July 6 (01865 361636)

Glastonbury: The biggest and best of the summer rock festivals returns to the Somerset countryside after a two-year absence. This year's "cultural experience" promises 1,000 performances on 17 stages by more than 500 bands. Other entertainments include the cabaret, comedy, circus performances, a children's adventure play area and educational workshops. Book early to avoid disappointment. June 27-30 (Information 0893 663899, tickets 0179 767888)

Glastonbury: Much Adn About Nothing (directed by Glen Walford) is this year's alfresco Shakespeare in the Castle. Plus An Evening with Joanna Trollope, David Jacobs Does Name Dropping, a repeat of last year's Legends of the Sixties concert and A Tribute to Freddie Mercury and Queen. June 21-July 6 (01371 831421)

Glastonbury: Four weekends of music in the medieval village rejoice in the theme Courts, Coronations and Celebrations, with performances by the Britten Sinfonia, Gabrieli Consort and Players, the London Ragtime Orchestra and Kenny Ball and his Band. June 20-29 (01233 812740)

Glastonbury: Baroque and Renaissance music with Lynne Dawson, the Orlando Consort, Florilegium, et al., in the Pilgrim Church, Broughton Aluph, Kent. Opera Restored performs Lampe's comic opera, *The Dragon of Wantley*. June 20-29 (01233 812740)

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THE TIMES ARTS



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... while Mark Wigglesworth steers his Welsh orchestra through an exhilarating Stravinsky night



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How does *Star Wars* rate, second time round? Read Geoff Brown on this week's film releases

How does his garden grow?

David Hockney tells Richard Cork why his forthcoming London show will be full of exuberant flower paintings

By choosing flowers as the main subject of his new London exhibition, David Hockney is implicitly aware that he offers us a challenge. "I know that there's a prejudice against flower paintings," he says, pacing around the spectacular sunlit room at the Anely Juda gallery for a trial hang of his luminous canvases. "I also realise that artists have rarely made memorable pictures of flowers, but I chose them as a theme to cheer myself up." Besides, he likes the idea of breaking all those taboos about chocolate-box prettiness. "My first idea for the show's title," he says with an anarchic grin, "was *Even You, They're All Flowers*."

Despite Damien Hirst's ever-growing notoriety, Hockney remains Britain's best-known and most popular contemporary artist. Strangely, though, he has not staged a large exhibition of new work on a London dealer's premises for 20 years. As if to compensate, the Juda show is his biggest ever in a commercial gallery: more than 30 small portraits will be hung in the room below the display of 18 still-life paintings. But why has there been such a long gap?

"Well, I've spent a lot of time working in the theatre, and I don't do enough painting," he explains. Hockney comes over to England from his Californian home about four times a year, but principally to stay with his family in Yorkshire. Portraits of his relatives will be included in the exhibition, testifying to his belief that sitters should already have familiar faces: "If you don't know them, you don't know enough about them".

His family relationships are especially close. "My mother's 96, and she can hear better than I can," he says wryly, saddled now with hearing aids in both ears. But he looks sprightly. Approaching his 60th birthday in July, he claims to "feel about 30". And he shifts incessantly in his chair during our conversation, smoking Camel cigarettes while forever thrusting out his arms with instinctive theatricality to reinforce the flow of words.

The starting-point for the flower pictures, all painted in a great rush of enthusiasm last year, was a visit to the Vermeer retrospective at The Hague. "I was incredibly impressed," he recalls. "Although Vermeer's colour is more than 300 years old, it'll last longer than MGM's. I was amazed at how dull everything

seemed when you came out of the show." So the often startling brightness of Hockney's flower pictures can be seen, in part at least, as his exhilarated and competitive response to Vermeer's radiance.

They are also, perhaps more significantly, the outcome of his desire to scrutinise the thing itself. In the past, he has often worked from photographs or his own imagination. But this time he worked only from life. "I've always had flowers in the house," he says. "And since Los Angeles is semi-tropical, even the

Although Vermeer's colour is more than 300 years old, it'll last longer than MGM's

sunflowers in a collector's house were like walking into a flower. In a way, everything is an abstraction if it's a picture."

Over the past few years, Hockney has pushed his own painting in an abstract direction. But these limp flower pictures mark a change, and he clearly revelled in the particular character of the species he chose. The grand sunflowers canvas was inspired by a gift from his friend Jonathan Silver, whose Salts Mill gallery in Bradford has a permanent display of Hockney's work. "Jonathan sent me all these sunflowers for my birthday," he remembers with a grin.

Taking on such a subject meant, inevitably, risking comparison with Van Gogh. But Hockney did not feel daunted. On the contrary: he relished the challenge posed by the blazing sunflowers. "Yellow is not a common colour in painting," he says, "but Van Gogh said it was the colour of hope. People are timid about colour, they don't like it."

Hockney manifestly does. He basks in the brazen, festive impact of the flowers in these unfettered canvases. But he is conscious, too, of their ability to symbolise transience. Even the most innocuous of 17th-century Dutch flower paintings can easily turn out to be memento mori. And Hockney, when pressed, admits that "I'm interested in fragility as a subject". He found himself painting the flowers fast, in order to ensure that they did not wither and perish before he had finished. "Every single day they altered, and I even saw a cactus growing when I included it in a still life with lemons." Change fascinates him as much as space, and the speed with which Hockney worked undoubtedly contributes to the pictures' liveliness. "Flowers shoot upwards in great celebratory bursts," he says eagerly, waving his hands in the air as if to mimic the eruptive impact of a firework display.

He has, of course, painted flowers before: one of his most-reproduced works, *Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy*, includes a particularly appealing vase of white lilies on a low table. But never before has Hockney devoted such single-minded energy to the subject, nor produced so many flower paintings in a sustained bout of exploration.

He finds working alone in the studio is a tonic after spending a major part of his time on demanding, and often exhausting, opera designs. "I've finished with the



David Hockney in front of 30 Sunflowers: "I react to the way my eyes dance around the flowers"

theatre now," he says. "It's an ephemeral art, making me give months and months to something that only lasts a few hours. In the theatre, collaboration means compromise, and I'd rather get back to painting on my own. I take out my hearing aids and work in complete silence."

He only stopped painting flowers

last year because his opera commitments obliged him to visit Australia for two major productions. "But when I return to California now, I shall just go back to flowers again. For me, it's a terrific subject."

Does the Juda exhibition mean that he is becoming more involved with London, or will he spend the rest of his life in the Californian sun?

"I'm a bit claustrophobic," he confesses, "and that's why I live in LA. I like big, white, open spaces. I love the vastness of the American West. England is small, and I've been abroad too long to come back now."

• David Hockney's exhibition, *Flowers, Faces and Spaces*, opens at Anely Juda Fine Art, 23 Dering Street, London W1 (0171-939 7578) on May 1

Saving our soul

LEWIS TAYLOR'S excellent debut album last year was a cultural conundrum: white men simply are not supposed to be this soulful. Lewis Taylor manages to be cool and contemporary but also deeply reverential to its rock and soul heritage. It is the sound of what might have happened if Marvin Gaye and Jimi Hendrix had made an album together with Brian Wilson as producer.

With the help of some celebrity endorsements from David Bowie and others, momentum is still building for the album more than six months after its release. And thanks to this intelligent book-

POP

Lewis Taylor
Ronnie Scott's, W1

ing, Taylor has made Ronnie Scott's the place to bring an enquiring musical mind during March with a run of Sunday night shows.

Opening with *Whooper*, he and his band were at once well drilled and in repose, dangling the track's persuasive groove in front of a crowded room like a hypnotist's pendulum. "Be prepared," he sang, "things can get a little bit tasty," accurately foretelling the invigorating hour that followed.

Taylor has learnt day's soul vocabulary from A to Z, elongating the vowel in the word "baby" like a true lost son of Motown, but he can peel off a lick like the prog-rock fan he also is, and sings of vexed modern relationships with a lyrical touch that would bring a smile from Curtis Mayfield.

So may he have the keys to the Motor City — achievement enough for a boy from Brixton in north London — but Taylor has also cracked the combination of electric guitar, full-flavour funk and rich harmonies that kept their shape on stage. *Track* and *Damn* went beyond his finger-snapping norm, making you want to sing along, and the forthcoming single *Bittersweet* was aptly named.

Most endearingly, Taylor is not at home to pretentious solemnity, smiling with his bandmates and thanking us sincerely. The theory that Caucasian soulfulness begins and ends with Jamiroquai may need some adjustment.

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CONCERTS: Shankars with sitars and Mahler makes three; celebrating Stravinsky; new baritone on the block

Bombay to Vienna

LSO/Mehta
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Indian independence may be sufficiently ancient history for its 50th anniversary to be celebrated, as it was by the London Symphony Orchestra on Monday night, without political embarrassment. Whether traces of cultural hegemony can be so easily masked is another matter.

The evening was a festive one, presenting, in the first half, works by Indian composers, and in the second half Mahler's First Symphony, conducted by the Bombay-born Zubin Mehta. Ravi Shankar, the former guru now nearly 77, appeared with his 15-year-old daughter Anoushka in his own Concerto No 1 for Sitar and Orchestra of 1971, and it was here that the cultural mix seemed most problematic. When Shankar gives himself the space to ruminante, unimpeded by orchestral intermissions, he is at his most evocative, but when he has the strings racing around like headless chickens, the result is anomalous.

The third movement (*Raga Adanai*) begins atmospherically with horns and upper strings, before lower strings and wind sustain quiet octaves under beautiful sitar solo. This minimal interaction works well, but all too soon we are back to the characteristic racing figures. With the final movement come lively antiphonal exchanges and passages of invigorating complexity for the two sitars and drums.

The precise role of Miss Shankar — her part rarely seemed independent — was unclear, but the sight of revered icon and glamorous daughter seated together on the floor brought them a standing ovation.

A moment of suspended animation in the first movement of Mahler's Symphony No 1 made the coupling seem less arbitrary. In any case this is a repertoire on which Mehta has an individual take. Characteristic were his exhilarating dash to the finish of the first movement, and the ubiquitous startling gestures (in all departments, not least percussion). But the faraway, dreamy lullaby of the third movement was also nicely conceived, and if the dance music is indeed a Jewish wedding, then the E flat clarinet was a spectral guest.

BARRY MILLINGTON

Stravinsky for all seasons

BBCNOW/
Wigglesworth
Festival Hall

SUNDAY'S BBC National Orchestra of Wales concert was presented under the banner of two festivals. *Stravinsky: Rites of Spring* and *Sound the Century*, so it was fitting that the programme felt so festive. It began with *Fireworks* and ended with *Petrushka*, two popular pieces which framed a pair of Stravinsky's less frequently played scores.

The programming was thoughtful. All the music came from the first two decades of Stravinsky's long, creative life, yet it showed how even early on the composer never ceased to reinvent himself. Nowhere was this better shown than in *Apollo*, perhaps the most Neo-Classical of his works. It is scored for strings alone and written in a wistful musical language that suggests Elgar with a few "wrong notes" thrown in. Mark

SUCH is the Wigmore Hall's voracious appetite for Lieder that the mere whisper of a new young baritone is enough to send its audience into a frenzy of expectation. So the burden on 24-year-old Stephan Genz was a heavy one in this recital of Schumann and Wolf. This may have accounted for the eagerness to please, which was at its most acute in the opening Schumann settings of Heinrich Heine's poetry.

The voice is an open, light baritone; but its presence was often masked by that of Genz as performer. Like a mime artist, his eyes, face, and entire body language vividly communicated each poem's bright tableau. Yet here, and in the Heine *Liederkreis* which followed, this semi-staging became trying, and too few phrases were really sung

through. In short, one longed for more voice, less face.

Throughout, Roger Vignoles's piano playing was thrillingly eloquent. In order to match it, Genz will have to calm down a little, breathe more deeply, take a step away from his teachers and simply allow his voice to sing more.

Geraldine McGreevy, winner of the 1996 Kathleen Ferrier Award, also made a

Too full facial

Genz/ McGreevy
Wigmore Hall

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Geraldine McGreevy, winner

of the 1996 Kathleen

Ferrier Award, also made a

somewhat tentative debut at the Wigmore Hall, but for almost diametrically opposite reasons. In a highly imaginative programme, which included music by Roussel, Warlock, Hugh Wood, Schumann and Strauss, McGreevy revealed a beautifully groomed, sweetly melodic soprano, but a somewhat bland performance.

McGreevy has a natural talent for the French repertoire, but for the disturbed doppelgänger of Hugh Wood's *Rabbit* and the *Foreboding*, the voice has yet to discover its shadow side. McGreevy, unlike Genz, needs to work harder at working her audience, and at focusing her responses more intensely on text and subtlety.

HILARY FINCH



JOHN ALLISON

Times Leader
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■ THEATRE
Satire of a very gentle variety comes in *Much Revue About Nothing*



■ CHOICE 1
Markus Stenz conducts Henze's opera, *Elegy for Young Lovers*
VENUE: Tonight at the Queen Elizabeth Hall



■ CHOICE 2
Evelyn Glennie performs a pair of concertos for percussion
VENUE: Symphony Hall, Birmingham, tonight



■ CHOICE 3
Pinter's *The Caretaker* is revived in Southampton
VENUE: Opens tonight at the Nuffield Theatre

THEATRE: Satire without a sting; bleak drama in Edinburgh; Oirish mayhem at the Tricycle

To the weak that was

I ntimiate revue died around 1962. Maybe it was because *Beyond the Fringe* made every other stab at satire seem insipid, or because the bright new comics opted to take their sketches to *That Was The Week That Was*, or because cute, clever little songs came to strike most people as passe. And I must say that, fun though it mostly is, *Much Revue About Nothing*, the compilation of bits and bobs from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s that Phillip George is staging at the King's Head, does not leave me avid

Much Revue About Nothing King's Head, N1

for a revival of the genre. It is sometimes hard to feel enthusiasm when numbers are maladroit, mocking the maladroit, or not really maladroit at all.

There is only one wholly spoken item, a slightly surreal sketch by Michael Bentine in which a murderous French husband mistakes the English translator in his living room for his wife's lover. Otherwise the evening consists of songs by composers and lyricists ranging from Julian (Salad Days) Slade through Vivian (Spread a Little Happiness) Ellis to Peter Cook. When a number about an old music-hall trouper who won over his audiences by telling them about his bad hip evolves into a woe-begone send-up of banally upbeat songs ("Take a tip and you'll be glad; if you're happy you'll never be sad"), you hardly need to glance at the programme to identify the



Pearly king and queen Susie Blake and Tony Whittle in *Much Revue About Nothing* at the King's Head

writer. That's Cook in his best funny glam mode.

Only two songs retain much bite. Sheldon Harnick's well-known *Merry Minnie* — "The Indians hate the Dutch, and I don't like anyone very much" — would make a good signature tune for an era of paranoid nations; with frightening weaponry at their disposal, Sandy (*The Boy Friend*) Wilson's *True Blue Love Song* is even more topical, though it presumably comes from the late Macmillan period. "Cocktails at seven, God's in his heaven," sings a Bejerman belle to her

chinless wonder as they unpack their Jag. "Don't let Labour ruin it." But the objects of satire are more often the woman who dresses her dog in trousers, the couple who have a vampire baby, the girl who falls for a gorilla, and (another well-known number) the unstoppable garrulous woman who proposes to and then rejects the stranger she mistakes for an old beau.

The excellent cast — Susie Blake, Cameran Blakely, Jacqueline Charlesworth, Tony Whittle — spend a lot of time having fun at the expense of the dated and naif: a song about a bank

clerk who loves the cha-cha-cha, another involving "two dainty bookends holding up dirty books".

But when they sang of the delights of April in Fairbanks, Alaska, or the joy of being very, very moderately in love, or when they satidically launched into a number called *Oh Don't You Hate It When They Make You Sing Along*, I found myself drawn into the spirit of the thing. There are rewards here for nostalgia freaks — and for those who find nostalgia freakish.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

peace is shattered as the women bicker, pull together and reveal their scars, each horror story worse than the last. All the while they live in fear of that dreaded knock on the door.

Although they are never seen on stage, it is men who dominate *Refuge* from the mutilating doctor who sends Beth flowers to the wheeling telephone calls that prompt Carolanne to scuttle home, to Sadie slapping on her warpaint to go on the pull.

It would be unkind to suggest that *Refuge* wins its Peggy Ramsay award for worthiness alone, for there is much to command it, but as drama it has its fallings. For all it addresses the awfulness of the women's situations and how the children suffer too, the first act of Gerda Stevenson's patchily acted production falls back on stereotypes and on aphorisms dressed up as dialogue. Only in the second act, when more narrative thrust comes into play, do matters improve.

Refuge is a cry of anguish at the results of domestic suffering, and although Paisley is not so naive as to offer instant solutions to a complex social ill, never once does the play attempt to get to the root of things and ask a very pertinent question. Why?

NEIL COOPER

"I Doubt It" Says Pauline Tricycle

JON KENNY and Pai Shortt, aka the D'Unbelievables, left perfectly reasonable jobs as writers and performers to impersonate a small galaxy of provincial Irish characters. The result has been routine chaos in the foyers and stalls of respectable theatres across the UK. For their last show, *One Hell Of A Do*, set on the eve and morning of a village wedding, the two comedians hauled half the audience out of their seats to act as bride, groom, family, guests and gatecrashers — an exhilarating piece of large-scale impro.

Much the same happens in *"I Doubt It"*. Says Pauline, a farce in which the locals of Glengoyl village gear up for their annual gala. With an array of wigs and unfeasibly large ears, the D'Unbelievables seamlessly work the dangerous gap between script and audience-baiting in their various guises as gossips, village idiots and self-important dignitaries.

There are some wonderful creations:

the bald-headed teacher in his flared brown suit, orange shirt leaking through his zipper, ostentatiously picking his nose while giving notes to "young Mahoney" in the third row; the grizzled hurley coach who exhorts his team to come back with the blood of the opposition — never mind that they are all under 14.

But there is a flip side to all this local colour. The strident manipulation can look as themed and fake as Oirish bars. Even the thick brogue sounds suspiciously calculated at times, and the sense of 100-mile-an-hour forced entertainment can be fitfully tedious.

It is in their running commentary with the audience, and the incidentals, that the duo earn their keep. What they send up brilliantly are the quirks of Irish parochial life: the 18 pairs of shoes that have to be cleaned on Sunday morning, the announcement that the six o'clock bus for the gala will leave at "seven thirty sharp". If they didn't feel the compulsion to clown it quite so hard, lot of this would be positively lyrical.

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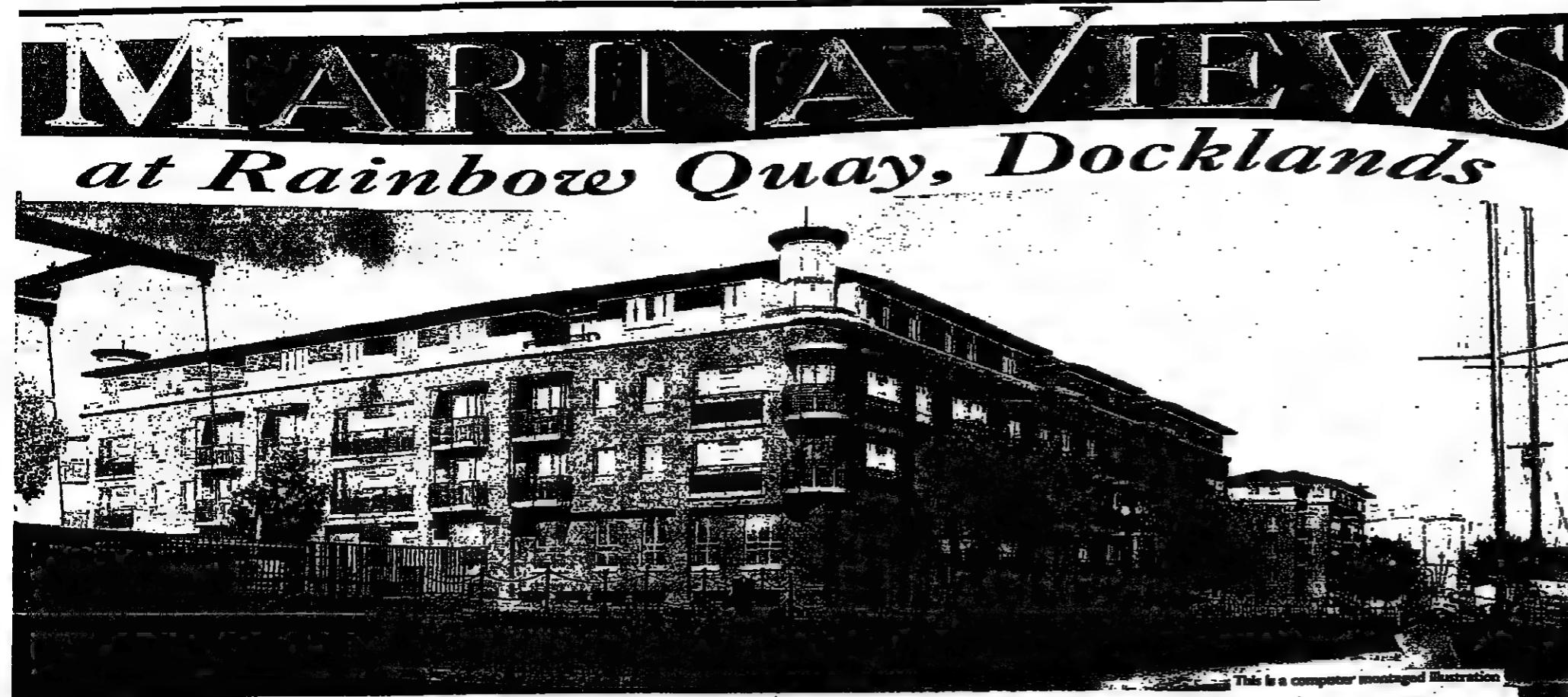
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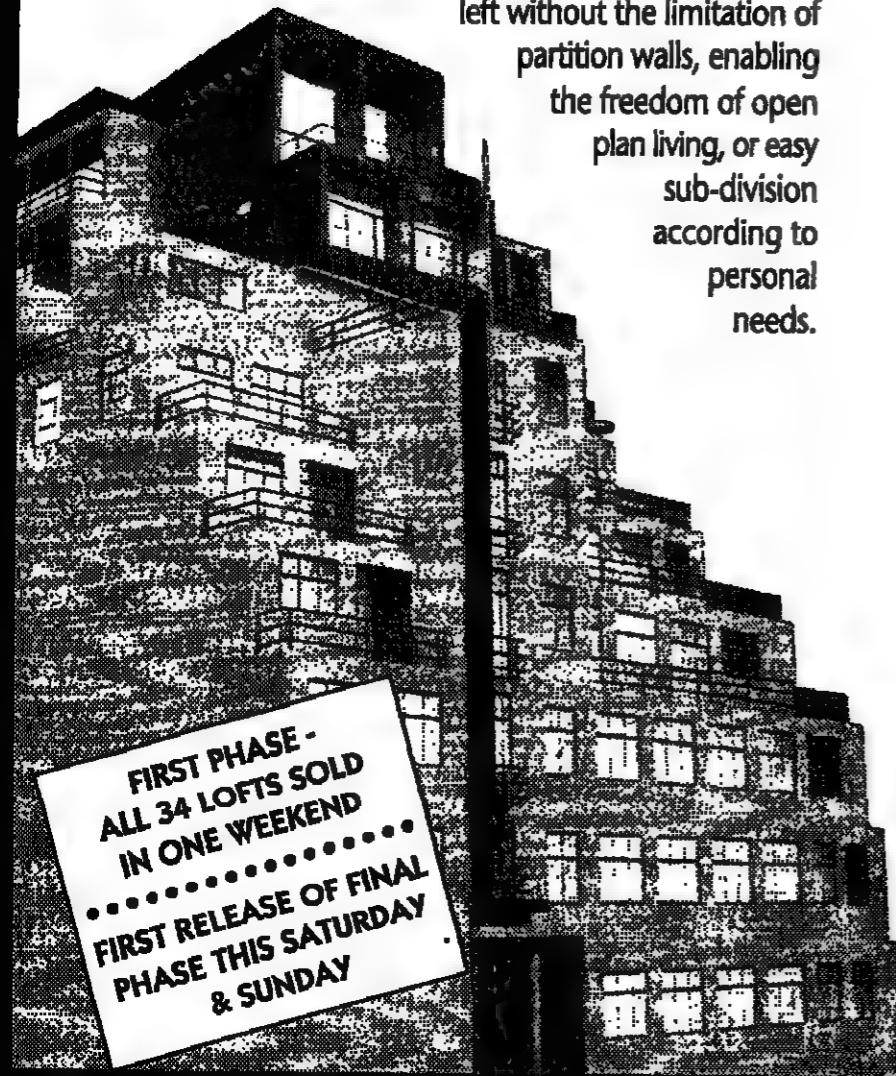
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With the general election fixed for May 1, we asked the three major parties to outline their policies for the future of Britain's housing

Our plans for the roof over your head

THE LABOUR PARTY

By NICK RAYNSFORD, MP
HOUSING SPOKESMAN

Current housing policies and programmes are hopelessly inadequate. A new approach is called for. In Labour's view there are four overriding priorities. First, we must learn the lessons of the 1980s. At that time all too many people overstretched themselves, believing that once they got their foot on the bottom step of the housing market, the escalator would carry them up to greater personal wealth. They made a terrible mistake and paid a very heavy price for it.

While house prices may rise ahead of general inflation for a year or two as we come out of recession, it is not realistic to expect substantial year on year increases in house prices while general inflation is held to 2 per cent or lower.

We also need to take steps to protect homeowners from the mis-selling of mortgages and related products, from other abuses in the market and from the risk of unnecessary repossessions. Our proposals for tackling the re-emerging problem of gazingumping have been widely welcomed, as have our plans for leasehold reform. Our flexible tenure proposals will both help people on modest incomes to progress by stages towards owner-occupation and assist others who, as a result of changing financial circumstance, might otherwise face the loss of their homes.

Labour offers a package of reforms to help to restore stability in the housing market and to provide new opportunities and safeguards for homeowners. At the same time we will revive the provision of social housing through local authorities, housing associations and new partnerships. This is the second key objective. We will release, on a phased basis, the receipts which councils have obtained from selling land and housing but which they are currently prevented from spending.

It must make sense to put these capital receipts back to use, building homes for the homeless and renovating run-down estates and, in the process, helping to generate jobs in the construction industry.

Thirdly, to increase flexibility for people to move areas, we will encourage a revival in good quality private-rented accommodation. We support housing investment trusts as a mechanism for increasing



institutional investment in private renting and will be looking closely at how we can help such bodies to develop in the years ahead.

We also need to break down the growing polarisation in housing which has created concentrations of poverty and deprivation in certain parts of our country. Indeed, measures to tackle unemployment, crime and vandalism are equally essential. But housing policies play a vital part. We must ensure that new developments provide opportunities for people to rent or to buy without undue segregation between the tenures.

We must also ensure that rent and benefit policies make it possible for people to get off benefit and into work. Helping to build strong and mixed communities is a vital part of a new housing policy.

Finally, we must tackle the backlog of poor condition properties in all tenures. New public/private partnership can help to bring private investment into areas of older, unmodernised council housing. A new approach towards home renovation policy can ensure that public money is used more effectively to lever in additional private investment and make it possible to develop strategic area-based renovation programmes.

A national licensing scheme for multi-occupied houses will help to raise standards in this sub-section of the market where the worst conditions are to be found, and at the same time reduce the tragic loss of life through fires and carbon monoxide poisoning in such premises.

Our new environmental task force will help to tackle the problem of hard-to-heat properties and in the process enable elderly people on low incomes to enjoy affordable warmth in the winter months.



The two faces of Britain's housing stock: the private residence and the run-down council estate



WHERE I LIVE

I LIVE with my wife and three daughters in my constituency of Greenwich. Nick Raynsford writes. We have a comfortable house with plenty of space for us and our three cats. It is our only home. One of the great benefits of representing a London constituency is that one does not need to split one's life between separate London and constituency homes.

Our home is important to us and is a focus for a lot of activity. My wife, Anne, is a keen gardener and has spent much of the past four years transforming the garden. She and I share a study where we can work without getting under each other's feet.

I am very conscious of how lucky we are to have such a lovely home. It is a constant reminder of the benefit which people derive from having a secure base. It is one of my strongest political ambitions to ensure that every member of society has that prospect too.

Most MPs make nice comments about their constituencies but I can truly say, with hand on heart, that Greenwich is a wonderful place to live. Tourists come to see the historic buildings and will come in even larger numbers to the Millennium Exhibition in three years' time. But Greenwich is not a museum. It is a genuine community and we are very proud and happy to live here.

Liberal Democrat policies for housing are based on our recognition of the diversity of people's needs. Not everyone wants to own their own home, and housing provision has to take into account variations in demand and cost.

The proposals we are putting forward are based on flexibility, to allow local authorities and developers to make the right decisions about how much new social housing is needed, and how to finance it.

Our approach dictates that prevention is more efficient than treatment. Since homelessness is such a problem, it is surely wise to ensure that fewer people are being made homeless in the first place.

In the house price collapse of the early 1990s, a third of a million people lost their homes. Our housing policy addresses this by proposing to phase out universal mortgage interest tax relief for first-time buyers and replace it with a means-tested mortgage benefit, which would allow full payment of mortgage interest (up to a ceiling) for families on income support and low incomes. This saves the cost of rehousing evicted families and paying housing benefit for private-rented accommodation.

As far as the private-rented sector is concerned, it seems that the

present Government is preparing to put more of a burden upon it than it can possibly bear. The new changes in housing benefit will mean that more and more single benefit claimants will be seeking private sector lettings. The Government has done little or no research into the amount of quality accommodation available. These benefit restrictions need to be reversed.

In terms of new social housing, we propose to remove restrictions on local government and give it the freedom to invest more in social housing. We want to give local authorities the opportunity to invest by phasing the release of capital receipts according to the needs of individual areas. At the

same time we want radically to reform the way local authorities can raise the money to invest in housing.

By DIANA MADDOCK, MP
HOUSING SPOKESWOMAN



WHERE I LIVE

SOON after I was elected in 1993, I bought a 200-year-old cottage in the heart of Christchurch, Dorset. Diana Maddock writes. It is a Grade II listed building and, from the first floor, I have wonderful views over Christchurch Harbour and the river — some of the most attractive features of the town.

There's a conservatory and even a small garden at the back. I can walk from the house out across the mudflats, which is always refreshing.

Now, of course, the Liberal

Democrats are the largest party on the council. It is not just the council that is close. From my home I can walk to most places I need: my constituency office, the station and town centre shops and restaurants are only a few minutes away. I can also get to the leisure centre near by, and visit Christchurch Priory where there are regular concerts.

So my cottage is very important to me: it's a still point in a hectic world.

same time we want radically to reform the way local authorities can raise the money to invest in housing.

By adopting the General Government Finance Deficit as the main measure of public borrowing, we would allow public accounts to show the true value of investment in homes, investment which saves money by taking families out of expensive temporary accommodation. This would also allow local authorities to set up housing corporations which could raise money through loans and investment.

We favour investment in bricks and mortar rather than expensive benefit subsidies — we've not forgotten that the cost of housing

benefit has soared from £4 billion to £10 billion in ten years.

There is much we can do to ensure that existing housing stock is used effectively. It seems scandalous that there are 700,000 empty properties in England and Wales.

Research estimates that around 125,000 empty homes could be refurbished for less than £5,000 each. Under Liberal Democrat housing policies, local authorities could bring into use any property left empty without reasonable cause for more than 12 months.

We also have plans to refurbish existing housing: more than four million people are living in houses classed as unfit for habitation.

There is progress to be made in energy saving: my own Home Energy Conservation Act, which became law in 1995, went some way to ensuring that new and existing homes could be energy-efficient. Liberal Democrats are also advocating reducing VAT rating of energy-saving building materials.

Tenants should have the power to make decisions on serious matters such as competitive tendering. We are particularly concerned at new DoE proposals to award housing investment money only where local authorities have put in place a plan for transfer of social housing to the private sector.

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

By DAVID CURRY,
HOUSING MINISTER

The most important challenge for the next government will be to combine a competitive economy with the delivery of effective but affordable welfare in the broadest sense. We have spelt out how we will address this need in pension provision and care of the elderly and are already delivering these policies in housing. The heart of our policy is:

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A real choice of tenure to provide a mobile workforce and meet individual needs;

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Sustainable home ownership;

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Bringing new partners into social housing in recognition of the reality (however unpalatable) that no government is going to revert to large-scale public financing and subsidised housing, and addressing the problems of inner-city estates by bringing housing and regeneration policies together.

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Over the past 18 years we have given millions the chance to buy a home for the first time in their lives. We have given council and some housing association tenants the right to buy their home at a discount. More than two million tenants have bought their homes since 1979. 1.7 million of them thanks to our Right to Buy policy.

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The new landlord buys the stock

on the basis that it remains as social housing with sub-market rents. They can use private sector funding for a public good. To date, 53 local authorities have transferred their housing to new landlords, raising more than £3.8 billion in private finance.

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RACING: O'SULLEVEAN FEATURED IN DOCUMENTARY TO MARK 150TH AINTREE SHOWPIECE

BY JULIAN MUSCAT

PETER O'SULLEVEAN, the BBC racing commentator preparing to call his fifth Grand National, is to feature prominently in the build-up to the historic steeplechase on April 5.

Staff at the *Grandstand* programme, which commences at 12.15 on the big day, are compiling a feature on O'Sullevan's Grand National scrapbook in what will almost certainly be his last commentary on the great race. It has been O'Sullevan's long-held ambition to complete 50 years behind the microphone at Aintree.

"It will be a big story on a big occasion," Dave Gordon, editor of *Grandstand*, said yesterday. "The piece with

Tony McCoy will be sidelined for ten days after being knocked unconscious when falling from Strong Tel in the last race at Uttoxeter yesterday.

Peter is one of a number of ideas we have to celebrate the 150th running of the Grand National. There are so many offbeat stories to choose from but Peter's achievement will be recognised." Additionally, the Aintree executive will unveil a bust of O'Sullevan on the course on Grand National day.

Known as "The Voice of Racing" for his mastery of the art, O'Sullevan spoke yesterday of the immense preparation required to commentate on one of the most unpredictable of sporting events. The thought of it filled him with terror. It was with gratitude, he said, that he could reflect on his close and lengthy association with the unique steeplechase.

Should Time For A Run prevail a fortnight on Saturday, a different kind of gratitude will be felt by an anonymous punter who laid



Aldaniti and Champion sail over Becher's Brook on their way to a famous victory in the 1981 Grand National

out £21,800 on the Irish-trained horse. The man, who walked into a William Hill betting shop in London with the cash yesterday, staked £10,000 at 25-1 and £10,000 at 20-1, paying tax on both bets. He stands to collect £450,000.

The BBC is also planning to increase its coverage of the three-day fixture, which commences on April 3. In addition to the daily live broadcasts, there will be a 25-minute highlights package on Saturday evening to round up the day's events. And to commemorate the 150th running, the corporation is to screen a 50-minute documentary, *Grand National Tales*, provi-

sionally programmed for 10.45pm on April 1.

The sheer wealth of the BBC archive allows Desmond Lynam — who will front the Grand National broadcast from Aintree for the thirteenth time — to indulge in a narrative embracing heartbreak and nostalgia in equal measure.

The programme, more than a year in the making, does not dwell on the legend of Red Rum, as have so many previous portraits of the National. Red Rum is given his due, of course, but the making of *Grand National Tales* is its unearthing of the unusual: of a bewitched solicitor who can

recite all the fallers at every fence for the last 25 years; of a gaggle of giggling Singapore nightclub managers who make the annual pilgrimage; and of the man who for years interloped with jockeys leaving the weighing-room — pausing only to smile at the cameras.

"My personal favourite was Bob Champion's victory on Aldaniti in 1981," recalled Lynam, in London yesterday for a private screening of the documentary. "On radio the previous year we had Bob as our pundit. To be honest, we only asked him to try and cheer him up. Evidence of his cancer was all over him and

we never thought he'd be with us 12 months later. We were all in tears — I remember not being able to talk when I was supposed to."

Richard and Mark Pitman — father and son who, 18 years apart, were touched off in remarkably similar circumstances aboard Crisp and Garrison Savannah respectively — relive their nightmares with a light touch. And the sequence of Mark Pitman's then-girlfriend, as she watched Garrison Savannah tire up that daunting run-in, vividly illustrates just how fine is the line between victory and defeat in the world's most famous steeplechase.

Time For A Run

prevail a fortnight on Saturday, a different kind of gratitude will be felt by an anonymous punter who laid

The Grey Monk eyes Fairyhouse

FROM RICHARD EVANS IN DUBLIN

WITH Imperial Call and Unbridled Missile unlikely to run, The Grey Monk is set to head the weights and lead a formidable British challenge for the Jameson Irish Grand National at Fairyhouse on Easter Monday.

Only four British-trained horses have won the race since it was first run in 1870, but yesterday's publication of the weights for the £100,000-added event saw no less than 17 British entries, including Gordon Richards' exciting chaser, who bypassed the Cheltenham Festival because of flat ground.

"The Grey Monk is an intended runner; provided the ground is okay," the Grey-stoke trainer said yesterday. "Twelve stone is not ideal but he is in great form."

David Nicholson has entered both Percy Smollett,

who should appreciate the right-handed Fairyhouse circuit, and St Melchoir Fairway, Both are intended runners if there is decent ground.

Seven Towers, winner of the Midlands Grand National on Saturday, has been pencilled in along with Sister Stephie, who finished third in the Uttoxeter race.

Mary Revelley, trainer of Seven Towers, said: "The horse will run only if it is soft because three miles five furlongs would not be a sufficient test otherwise."

Apart from the Irish National, another 20 British-trained horses are entered at the three-day meeting. Sparky Gayle, the Cathcart Chase winner, and Squire Silk, runner-up in the Arkle, could take on Doran Price, third in the Cheltenham Gold Cup, in the Power Gold Cup.

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David Nicholson has entered both Percy Smollett,

Imperial Call, and Unbridled Missile.

Unbridled Missile, 5-2, 1st Uttoxeter, 2nd Fairyhouse, 3rd Cheltenham Gold Cup, 4th Power Gold Cup.

Yesterdays results

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Guscott does his stuff with a vengeance

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

It is a shameful thing: one of the lowest of low emotions. And consequently it is something that goes very, very deep. It is the desire to stuff it up — no, really, I am sorry for this demotic language, but there is no other way of putting it. It is a low thing, and it can only have a low name.

And yet it is one of the most powerful and compelling of all emotions, something that inflames a person with desire, something that in its discharge leaves one almost comatose with self-satisfaction.

Flashback many years: a press awards ceremony. And there is a personal devil emerging from still deeper in my past, one who shifted heaven and earth in his efforts to get rid of me, and who told me I would never work in the national newspapers. "Simon," he said, rather sporting, "Congratulations."

"Thank you," I said. "I owe it all to the way you trained me." And, being a petty person at heart — like every other human being — I glowed like the aurora borealis with self-delight.

And so I send fraternal greetings to Jeremy Guscott. Now, I have never been a member of the Guscott-is-God club; I have found him more frustrating than inspiring. Apart from a few minutes at the end of the game against Ireland, he was omitted by the *sol-diant* master tactician of an England rugby union coach, Jack Rowell, for all but the final 40 minutes of the five nations' championship.

And did Guscott ever stuff it up? Jack Rowell last Saturday. I have never seen him play so brilliantly, with razored incisiveness, with lethal inventiveness, with rat-trap defence. He played like a man in a cold, murderous rage. He sought to pack a full international season into those 40 minutes, and he succeeded admirably in his aim.

His aim was, it seemed, not so much to beat Wales, but the



Fired up for his belated chance to impress, Guscott bursts clear of the Wales defence during an inspired display. Photograph: Marc Aspland

still more laudable ambition of stuffing it up. He made Rowell look a fool and a blind one, a person enslaved by his own sense of self. Guscott made the rugby union world shake its head and say: "Well, if he had played all season, England would probably have beaten France." By easy and not necessarily fair stages, Guscott has made his coach look like the man who cost England a grand slam.

Sweet. From the lowest of motives, the highest of performances: 'twas ever thus in sport. In football it has been elevated to the level of a guiding principle, one that the Italians call *l'immobile legge dell'et' — the immutable law of the ex.*

Which means, if you are Mark Hughes, you are always going to score against Manchester United. A player who has known the hurt of rejection *invariably* scores against his old club. This is not because he knows the ways of his former colleagues and has some kind of tactical advantage, for the same principle would work against him. No. His appetite is the stronger, that's all, and that is because he is inspired by the unholly need to stuff it up.

Guscott's spell on the replacements' bench worked for the benefit of his side when at last he was allowed the opportunity. And the bench does seem to have some kind of magic. But few managers, I think, deliberately use the play of benching a player in order to inspire him. The magic only works when there is a matter of spite involved.

Fastino Asprilla was bought for vast sums by

Newcastle United and then had his nose put out as still more vast sums were paid for Alan Shearer. But Asprilla's recent Premiership performances, when promoted from the bench in Shearer's absence, have re-inspired a lost-looking side.

Meanwhile, a still more famous bench-warmer remains waiting for the day in which he will make someone suffer. Gianluca Vialli, one of

the most illustrious players in English football, spent another 85 minutes on the bench last Sunday.

"This should not be happening to a great player like this. He deserves more." This was, incredibly, Ruud Gullit, the Chelsea manager. "It hurts me to keep him on the subs' bench, but at the moment there is nothing I can do."

Vialli has behaved impeccably throughout this difficult

period. But at 32, there is no future in bidding your time. He must be going mad. Sooner or later someone will pay for this, and it could be Chelsea, it could be Gullit.

It has been suggested that Vialli's Italy and Chelsea colleague, Gianfranco Zola, who is carrying a hip injury, needs to take a break. "I don't want to rest," he said. "If I stay well, then I feel I must play in every game. Missing some matches and playing in others is not an option for me. If I am playing well and the team is playing well, it is not wise to make changes."

No. Or you end up a long-term substitute when the team does still better without you. And all you can do is sit there, burning with the urge to stuff it up.

Stuffing it up may be a low emotion, but it brings out all of a player's most combative qualities. Qualities that will be needed by the England cricket team this summer against the rampant Australians. Does Mark Ramprakash, the brilliant Middlesex batsman last seen for England making a pair at Lord's, nurse in his heart the corrosive desire to stuff it up? If so, pick him like a shot.



Vialli, consigned to the bench again, awaits the opportunity to make someone suffer

WORD-WATCHING

Answers from page 44

CESTUS

(a) A belt or girdle for the waist; particularly that worn by a bride in ancient times. Specifically that of Aphrodite or Venus. From the Greek *keftos* stitched. Also a contrivance consisting of thongs of bullhide, loaded with strips of iron and lead, and wound round the hands. Used by supporting Roman busters as a protection and to give greater weight to the blows. Latin *caestus*, commonly regarded as an anachronism from classical times. But probably influenced by the girdle.

CHAKRA

(a) A circular weapon, used by the Sikhs. From the Sanskrit for a wheel. The *chakra* or chakra is a thin knife-edged ring of flat steel, a mere missile in skilled hands. Also mystic circle placed in the hands of pictured Hindu gods. In Yoga, one of the centres of spiritual and cerebral power in the human body. Also the emblem on the flag of India.

CHALAZA

(c) Each of the two membranous twisted strings by which the yolk-bag of an egg is bound to the lining membrane at the ends of the shell, and kept near the middle of the albumen, with the germinating point uppermost. From the Greek word for haul, or any small lump or knot like a ball-stone.

CHANDLER'S WOBBLE

(b) A movement in the Earth's axis of rotation that causes latitude to vary with a period of 14 months. An eponym of Seth Chandler (1846-1913), an American astronomer. Chandler's discovery was facilitated by his invention of the almanac, a device for measuring the positions of stars relative to a circle centred at the zenith rather than to the meridian.

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE

1 ... Qd1! Kd2! [Qd1! Bxe4+ mating] 2 ... Qe2+ 3 Kh3 Bxe4 and the White position collapses.

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RACING 43

Voice of racing
helps to unravel
National treasures

SPORT

WEDNESDAY MARCH 19 1997

5th

Fans' behaviour under scrutiny

United need
peace and
prosperityFROM ROB HUGHES
FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT
IN OPORTO

AS Manchester United's flight circled Oporto airport yesterday, held up in the traffic swelled by the team's 10,000 travelling supporters, Alex Ferguson, the manager, reflected on the modicum of caution it is his duty to instil.

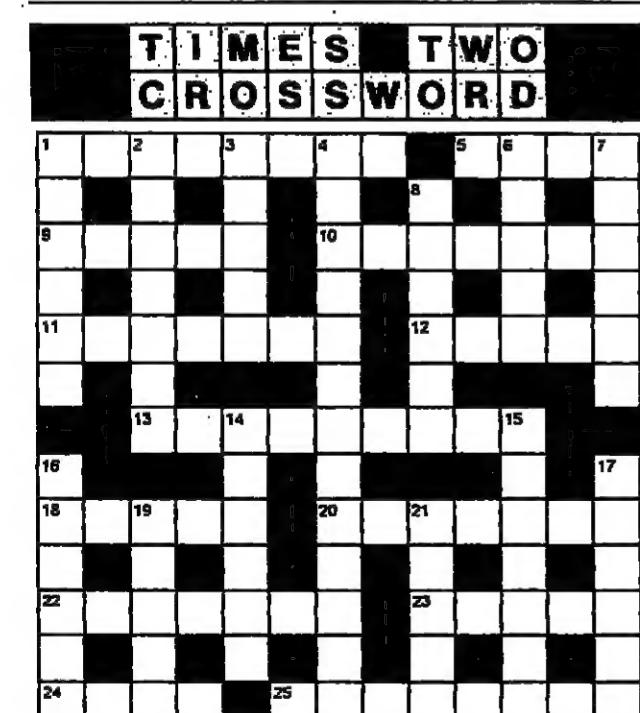
"We don't want to do anything silly," he opined. "It would take a tremendously inspired performance by Porto to win this tie now. But they will have their pride, they will come out looking for that early goal, and we will have to be professional, to do our job properly."

That said, the mission is, of course, well in hand. But taking a four-goal lead to a team whose supporters are as passionate as any in Europe does not invite complacency. History rules it out, for 19 years ago, in this very stadium, United lost 4-0.

Nevertheless, England needs two victories tonight. Not since 1985, the year of Heysel, have the English champions reached the semi-finals of the European Cup, nor have so many English supporters been abroad to follow their club since then.

They must beware the intoxication of glory. It was there in both airports yesterday. As the United players filed through the customs lounge in Manchester they walked into a throng of backslapping supporters, many of them already reeking of drink. And as they disembarked after the 2½-hour flight to northern Portugal, where the temperatures approached 25C, the hordes were there again.

One of them, entertainingly enough, took a ride on the baggage carousel, filming the players and directors on a camcorder as he was carried by. So far, so good. But in the stadium tonight there will be



No 1045

ACROSS
1 Put a number to (S)
5 Knock (loc): portion of tick-
et (4)
9 Burning (5)
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11 Drown: succumb (2,5)
13 Really enjoy oneself (4,1,4)
18 Improvised (2,3)
(Esp: govt) income (7)
22 Projecting fortification: de-
fence (7)
23 Instrument: flower (5)
24 Arduous journey (4)
25 Trend: inclination (5)

SOLUTION TO NO 1044
ACROSS: 6 Squeezed 7 Prism 9 Naked 10 Tenaille 11 Trompe
Toes 14 Smorgasbord 17 Rhombus 19 Agate 21 Soggy
22 Modular

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450 police and outside it there will be many more forces of the law, including armed units specially flown in from Lisbon. That old, dangerous cocktail, Latin chaos and the English reputation for violence, is coming together.

For the most part, these supporters will be just what United need in the Estadio das Antas. They will pit their voices against the 40,000 home fans in the 50,000-capacity stadium.

The British Embassy is hoping for peace but knows that only 6,400 of United's

Trafford two weeks ago, he now shuns even his own press, taking Porto out of town.

Oliveira is a man beleaguered. For two thirds of this season his team was omnipotent, uncatchable in the Portuguese league and conquerors of AC Milan in the Champions' League. In 27 games at home and abroad, Porto had conceded 12 goals; but before, during and after the meeting with United, their nerve broke. In their next five games, the defence shipped another 12.

Jorge Nuno Pinto da Costa, the president of the club, called upon the citizens of Oporto to regard defeat in England as exaggerated and not an occasion for "inconsequent despair". Speaking for his hidden coach, the president was well aware that another home defeat, following last Friday, when Porto succumbed to Sporting Lisbon, their arch rivals for the first time in 21 years on their own ground, will bring the club under even more intense scrutiny.

The rest of the country has grown tired of Porto's supremacy. In Lisbon, they are only too eager to believe all manner of allegations about Porto's bribery of referees, including one relating to the semi-final of the Cup Winners' Cup in 1984, when they defeated Aberdeen. That Aberdeen team was managed by Ferguson. If vengeance is any part of his motivation on this visit, one would not detect it. Ferguson has other things, such as a pulled hamstring, a damaged ankle and a thigh muscle strain on his mind.

He is unlikely to start with Andy Cole, whose form lately has been the best of his United career, because why should United risk a goalscorer whose left thigh is sore? Indeed, the emphasis will be on containing the Portuguese pride and passion in midfield.

Gary Neville trained last night and appears ready to play despite two stitches in a swollen ankle, but Ryan Giggs, who probably gave the performance of his life in tearing Porto asunder two weeks ago, has a hamstring strain and may not be risked.

Hence Ferguson may use Jordi Cruyff on the left of midfield. But, no matter, for Porto to rediscover their thread and to overcome the palpable fear which Hilario, their goalkeeper, admits he had in advance of meeting Cantona and Co the first time.

Dioch departs, page 45
Midweek View, page 46

fans have been allocated tickets for the area of the ground earmarked for them. The rest are either in possession of tickets for the FC Porto stands (acquired from rogue travel agents and touts), or hoping to buy them on the streets.

Let us hope that the match remains the focal point. Ferguson can relax as much as his combative nature will allow, for the pressure is on his opponent, yesterday Antonio Oliveira, the successor to Bobby Robson as the Porto coach, had gone to ground. Having incurred a £5,000 fine for refusing to meet the media after the humiliation at Old

TEAM



The Manchester United players were in relaxed mood as they arrived at Oporto airport yesterday. Photograph: Alex Livesey/Allsport

Klinsmann may prove Royle attraction

BY RUSSELL KEMPSON

JURGEN KLINSMANN, the Germany captain, announced yesterday that he will be leaving Bayern Munich at the end of the season. The surprise move is sure to alert English clubs and lead to increased speculation that he could return to the FA Carling Premiership that he graced with Tottenham Hotspur two seasons ago.

Klinsmann, 32, is unlikely to return to White Hart Lane, which he left only 12 months into his two-year contract. His premature departure, after he had scored 29 goals, proved bitter and acrimonious, with Alan Sugar, the Tottenham chairman, claiming that he had been betrayed.

Although Klinsmann is understood to have offers to play in Spain, Everton and Nottingham Forest could also join the chase. Each has

substantial transfer funds at its disposal and Joe Royle, the Everton manager, has long been an admirer of the much-talented forward.

Royle flew to Germany to watch him play for Bayern in the Bundesliga recently and is keen to strengthen a side that lacks a consistent goalscorer.

He is also believed to be preparing an improved offer for Trevor Sinclair, the Queens Park Rangers winger.

Klinsmann has decided to invoke a clause in his contract, which is not due to expire until June next year, that allows him to leave on a free transfer at the end of the season. He has become disillusioned with the bickering at the club and at criticism from Franz Beckenbauer, the Bayern chairman, and Lothar Matthäus, the club captain.

I had a talk with Beckenbauer last week and told him I would probably go

abroad next season," Klinsmann, who has also played for Stuttgart, Internazionale and AS Monaco, said yesterday. "I don't seem to fit in here. I wanted to tell Bayern now so that they can plan for the future."

Beckenbauer, who played the key role in bringing Klinsmann back to Germany, said: "It's a shame. We wanted to keep Jürgen a lot longer. But it's his decision and we have to accept it."

George Graham's troubled reign as manager of Leeds United hit a new low yesterday when Carlton Palmer, the former England midfield player, was let out of the team for the Tottenham match.

His written transfer request will go before the board of directors with Graham's recommendation. "What I will be recommending remains private," Graham said, "but I am not surprised by his request."

Andrei Kanchelskis, the former Manchester United and Everton winger, is reported to be unsettled at Fiorentina, the club he joined from Everton only two months ago. "He has been catapulted into a new world and is obviously handicapped by the language problem," Luciano Lura, the Fiorentina managing director, said.

Yeoah, the Ghana striker, was fined two weeks' pay for ripping off his shirt and throwing it at Graham when he was substituted in the 1-0 Premiership defeat by Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane on Saturday.

Graham would not disclose the amount of the fine. "That will remain private but I have told Tony to get back to his playing weight," Graham said. "That means he will have to lose just under a stone. I've looked at the weight he was when he came here and the



Klinsmann: disillusioned

Scottish clubs benefit by £7.25m

BY MARK SOISTER

AFTER one of their worst seasons in the five nations' championship, which included three record defeats, Scotland face the prospect of permanent relegation to the second division of world rugby union unless drastic action is taken to bolster the domestic game.

Duncan Paterson, the Scottish Rugby Union's convenor of rugby, outlined his concerns at Murrayfield yesterday as the union announced plans to put £7.25 million, largely from income from the sale of tele-

vision rights, into club rugby over the next three years as part of its commitment to develop the game on a three-tier basis.

However, the vehicle for international success will remain professional districts, each with its own administration, professional coaches — who will be announced in a fortnight — and ultimately its own stadium.

Unless results improve in the European Cup next season via Scotland's three representatives, Caledonia, Scottish

Borders and Glasgow, Paterson believes that Scotland will be squeezed out of the competition, with dire consequences.

We are hanging on by our fingernails," Paterson said. "Ten or 12 clubs in England and France want our places in Europe now. If that happens we could slide into oblivion. What we are trying to do is have a three-tier system and fast-track as fast as possible to ensure our international survival."

Five nations' threat, page 44

Whiff of revolution in air at Sussex

Pat Gibson finds entrenched positions that promise a stormy annual meeting

Like John Major, Ken Hopkins, the chairman, is turning a blind eye to the opinion polls. "As far as I am concerned," he said, "we were elected by the membership to serve for three years and in my case I will not seek re-election until February next year. If the vote goes against us at the special meeting, that will be a different matter."

Not the general election, but something of far greater importance to those who care about such things — the annual meeting of Sussex County Cricket Club, whose members have been roused from their deck-chairs by their former fast bowler, Tony Pigott, who has a vision of the future and the soundbites to go with it.

His resolution, calling for a vote of no confidence in the committee and their immediate resignation en bloc, may not be tabled until a special meeting, which he has forced on April 8. However, if the annual meeting — switched from the county ground at Hove to Brighton's Grand Hotel because of the expected turnout — is hostile towards them, they may have no alternative but to go.

more who have only just been elected — Robin Marlar, a former captain, Jim May, a Brighton businessman, and Dick Holste, a long-serving member — have declared their support for Pigott's manifesto, suitably entitled Sussex 2000. This leaves another former captain, John Barclay as the floating voter holding the balance of power, al-

though it was suggested last night that he was drifting towards the old guard.

A meeting between Hopkins and Pigott did little to help. "We did find some common ground in that we both care about Sussex," Pigott said. "Where we differ is that so far no one has actually taken responsibility for what has happened at the club and no one, apart from myself, has actually stood up to be counted."

□ David Graveney, the new chairman of England selectors, yesterday rebuked Raymond Illingworth, his predecessor, for suggesting that Michael Atherton should be replaced by either Nasser Hussain or Adam Hollioake as captain of England for the one-day internationals against Australia this summer. "Ray had two years as a selector," Graveney said.

"He's had his time and now it's down to Mike Gatting, Graham Gooch and myself to sort out which is the best way to sort out the problem."

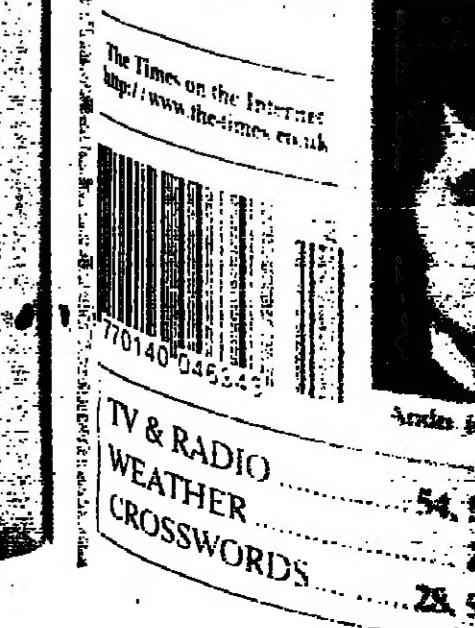
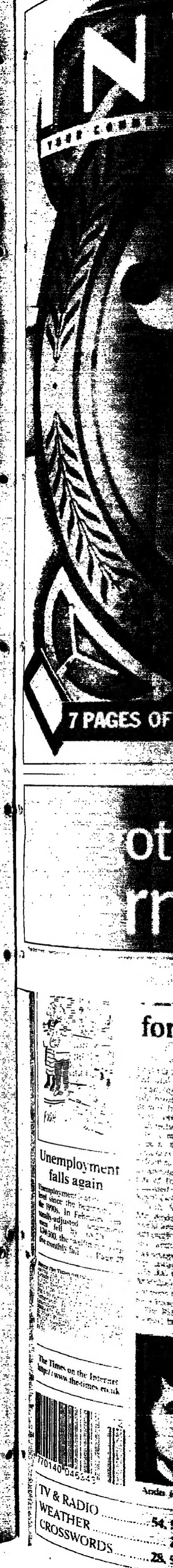
Hopkins has the support of two members of the committee, its vice-chairman, Alan Wadey, and the club's general manager, Frank Horan, but three



Barclay: key player

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